



The Dhamma

OF

Ajaan Paññāvaddho

Samadhi & Wisdom

Samādhi and Wisdom

Transcriptions of Talks given by

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Samādhi and Wisdom

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Fundamentals of Meditation

The first thing we need to talk about is the need for meditation practice, and why one is doing it. We start off with the fundamental basis of Buddhism, which is that we all have *dukkha*, discontent. And we're trying to cure it. When we try to cure *dukkha*, we use the methods of cause and effect. We always try to find those causes, those things to do, which will get rid of the *dukkha*. *Dukkha* can be anything from little irritations up to big suffering. This is what we're trying to cure. It makes no difference if you are a Buddhist or not, that's what everyone is trying to do. This aim is what drives them on. And they're trying to cure them by the method of cause and effect. They are trying to find those things which will lead to the relief of their suffering. If they are wise and they understand rightly, then they might do the right things and they do in fact get relief from their discontent. But because people have *kilesas*, the tendency is to do the wrong thing all the time. When people do the wrong thing, they get only more and more suffering. This is because they don't understand the right way of getting rid of discontent, so they do all the wrong things. This is the situation we are in. Because of that, we have to turn our lack of understanding into correct understanding, our lack of knowing the right way into the right way. If we can do that, then we truly will be able to get rid of the discontent. So our purpose is to search for the right way to act, the right way to do things, the right way to behave. And this is really the whole of Buddhism: to learn how to act properly, how to think properly, how to speak properly. If we can do that, we cure the discontent. We can do it in that way. In order to do it we must train ourselves. We must train ourselves to have a sharp mind, to understand the reasons of things in our lives; in fact, to know ourselves properly. And by getting to know ourselves, we get to know other people. By getting to know others, we learn to know how to behave rightly towards them. And we know how to behave rightly in ourselves. This is the thing we must try to do.

The method we use is the method taught by the Buddha, which is the way of *sīla* (morality), *samādhi* (training of mind) and *paññā* (wisdom). If we learn how to do those and practice those, then we can overcome the *kilesas* that we've got within us. If we overcome the *kilesas*, the discontent, the suffering that we have will die away. This practically possible — one can do it. Many people have. Many people have done the practice and found very good

results from it. They find a lot of happiness and contentment coming from it. So the correct way is the way of morality, *samādhi* and wisdom.

Morality in Buddhism always concerns just actions of the body and speech. That is morality in Buddhism. It doesn't concern the mind itself, because the mind is too subtle. It can jump about and one can't catch it so easily. The training of mind is also very important, however, because if one thinks wrongly one tends to forget and that thinking goes out into speech and action. So one very easily does wrong things. It's the speech and action that are the wrong moral behavior.

In Buddhism, morality is necessary to put ourselves correct with the world. In other words, if we have a good moral basis, then we feel no pull to the world – we don't harbor guilt inside ourselves. We don't have feelings of discontent where the world is concerned to the point where we can't settle down. If we have good morality, we can settle easily and do the meditation practice and forget the world. Because when we do meditation practice, the less our minds tend to go out into the world, the more we can do the meditation practice properly. So it's necessary to understand the reason why we practice morality in connection with meditation. If we understand, that gives us confidence in the practice. And also it gives a method whereby we can work out to some extent what we should and what we shouldn't do in the practice. Because we know what we're trying to achieve, what we're aiming for. If we know that we can then think out the best method of getting there.

One must understand with morality, it doesn't mean just the 5 *sīla*. It also means general right behavior. It means good manners. It means being careful in doing things. It means doing things in a seemly, proper way. All of this comes under *sīla*. The 5 *sīla* are, of course, the important one's, they are the real pillars of morality. But there is plenty more than that. One can see that some people behave in a very course way and it shows up. When someone behaves in a course way, we call him a course person. Whereas, someone who behaves in a refined way we call a refined person. And these two people tend to think in different ways, and because their actions flow out from their minds, they will act in different ways too. When what flows out is good, the actions will be good as well. So we should pay attention to our everyday behavior as well as the specific five *sīla*.

When it comes to the meditation practice, the main thing is to try to hold the mind — the monkey mind, the mind which jumps about all over the place. In most people the mind is pretty much uncontrolled. It jumps about wherever it chooses. Without even trying the mind flies all over the world and then comes back. You may be able to do the meditation practice on the breathing or *Buddho* for 10 seconds before the mind flies away for 20 minutes touring the world. This is well known in people who meditate. It is this that you must try to stop. You must try to bring the mind under control because a mind out of control like that can think of all sorts of things under the direction of the *kilesas*. The things it thinks about are either neutral, in which case they won't help you, or they are actually harmful — because the *kilesas* make them so. The *kilesas* are the things that cause the trouble all the time. Without the *kilesas* the practice would be easy, anyone could do it. So the aim here is to try to hold the mind to one object, such as the breathing or *Buddho*, and not to let it jump out all over the place. This is a training, and like any other training you do it by effort, by knowing what you're doing and why and striving to do it. If you keep on doing this steadily, gradually you'll bring your mind under control. Once it's under control, you'll find that it becomes more concentrated, more capable and more contented. Because concentration and happiness are the same thing. When you are concentrated you're at one, everything is together. It is a state of contentment, and a state of contentment is happiness. So you can say that when the mind is concentrated, it's happy. This also shows up in the pursuits that people undertake. Why do people climb mountains? You can say: because they're there, but that's not a very good reason. The reason almost certainly is that when you climb a mountain you've got to be concentrated. Otherwise, you fall down — and that's painful. So people like to climb mountains because it makes them concentrated. This is the reason many people do odd things in the world, things that are quite dangerous. When they are doing those dangerous things, they have to concentrate — it forces them to. It shows how when people are concentrated, they are happy and content. It's for this reason that they do these things.

As far as Buddhism is concerned, the control of mind brings happiness. And when the mind is under sufficient control, you can turn it to developing wisdom. And this is really the important thing, because it's the wisdom that gets rid of the *kilesas*. Wisdom destroys the *kilesas*. It destroys them because one can see the right reasons for doing things. In other words, the ignorance

we've had in the past, where we don't know whether we're doing the right thing or the wrong thing, that tends to go away. Once one gets the wisdom one can see what's right and what's wrong. One can see the ways of cause and effect. And when we can see the ways of cause and effect, we see how the wrong causes we've been doing, the bad things we've been doing, tend to harm only ourselves. They bring us nothing but harm and suffering. When we see that clearly we no longer do those things. For that reason, wisdom is the thing we want. That's what we have to work for.

A person who has developed *samādhi*, control of mind and concentration, sometimes will think that merely by developing that *samādhi*, wisdom will come on its own. But it doesn't. The only chance of it coming on its own from the development of *samādhi* is if they naturally have quite a lot of wisdom in them anyway. Normally, when one practices for *samādhi* one gets only *samādhi*. But to attain wisdom, one also has to practice for that. The *samādhi* practice is of great benefit here — it sets the mind right. It puts it in the right attitude, or the right mood, to develop wisdom. When it's in that mood, one can then investigate. And by that investigation one gradually learns the way of wisdom. And from that, one gets the wisdom. But you shouldn't think that the *samādhi* itself will bring wisdom. It doesn't. It brings you the basis for wisdom, that's all.

So the point is, when you have developed *samādhi*, you must turn to developing wisdom. The first place to start developing wisdom is in relation to your physical body. Investigate it. Look at it to see what it is. Ask yourself: is this me, is it mine? Where did it come from, where does it go to? Is it pleasant? You must ask all sorts of questions like that. Start looking at it from the outside first and then go inward. You can look at it in many ways. And by looking at it like that, the understanding comes that this body isn't me, this body isn't mine. This body belongs to the world. It came from the world and it goes back to the world. When we can understand that clearly then we are far less concerned about what happens to the body. So the fear of death tends to drop away. You can see by this how wisdom brings reduction of discontent and suffering. Wisdom shows us that this body is not the thing that matters. In other words, when the body dies, I don't die. Seeing that, our fears tend to ease off quite a lot.

Using body contemplation, we can go quite a long way in Dhamma. It can lead one into quite good states of Dhamma. From there one can go on to investigate the mind and the ways of the mind, but that's a little bit more esoteric. When one is contemplating the body: here's the body, you can see it. You can see the inside of it, either by seeing another body that's been pulled to bits, or by looking into your own body and seeing it with your mind. It's gross. It's not difficult to get hold of. When you come to the mind, however, it's very subtle. So it's difficult to get hold of, difficult to understand. And because of that, first of all you have to train yourself in wisdom to quite a large degree before you can really tackle the mind in the right way. When you can get to the mind in the right way, then all sorts of things are thought of which one had never thought of before.

All of this is really the way of the *Satīpaṭṭhāna*. *Satīpaṭṭhāna* deals with body, feeling, *citta* and *dhammas*. Now the body is just the body, and we deal with it in the way we think of it. In other words, we deal with it in the way we understand the body to be. So we deal with it by feeling it as a physical body. There are other ways of looking at the body too and all of them are ways we use to distinguish the physical body. These are the normal ways an ordinary person thinks of his body. When it comes to feeling, that's going deeper inside. The feeling is another way of looking at the body. The feeling is a more subtle thing than the body. Then you come to the *citta* and that's another way of looking at the body, going more subtle still. And when you come to *dhammas*, that's dealing with the whole of the principles of the body and the principles of the mind. That becomes the most subtle aspect of everything. So these *Satīpaṭṭhāna* lead us more and more inward and more and more subtle.

But we have to start off with the gross side of it first. When we gain some understanding there it will probably automatically start going into more subtle stuff. In order to find out what I am, first I have to find out what I am not. If you know what you're not, you'll know what you are. So we look to see what we're not. One of the things we're not is the body. We're not the world, that's outside. We're not the body either because this body belongs to the world. It came from the world, it depends on the world and it goes back to the world. We've grasped hold of it and we just use it. Once we've grasped hold of it we have to put up with the troubles that the body brings us. But the body is also useful because with the body we have a kind of mechanism

that allows us to think and understand things, to have good memory and so on. With this we can pursue the way of Dhamma. Without a physical body it's very difficult. So the body is necessary, and it's valuable. But we also have to come to realize that this body is not the nice, pleasant thing that most people think of it as. It's a burdensome thing. We have to carry it about all over the place and that's tiresome. If we use it for any length of time we get exhausted. The body is unpleasant in all sorts of ways. In the hot weather it sweats and feels uncomfortable. The body gives us a lot of trouble all the time. It's often unwell, feels sick, perhaps you have a slight headache or bodily aches and pains, feeling tension, not feeling completely at ease. It's all *dukkha*, the whole lot. The body brings us a lot of *dukkha*. If we can come to realize that this body is not me, then we realize that we have to have the patience to put up with it. If I think that I am the body, then what happens to the body happens to me — because I'm identified with the body. When we identify with the body, then we become very concerned when anything happens to it. We are constantly afraid that our health might fail, that we might have a heart attack or a stroke or something like that. And fear is also a form of *dukkha*. So from this practice we come to a realization that we are not the body — and it has to be a true realization, not merely an intellectual thinking. Merely thinking about is of no real use. It can help in so far as it sets up the reasoning. The actual realization must come through the practice. And it comes of itself.

With most people it comes this way: They steadily do body contemplation over and over again, and perhaps at some other time they see the body in a completely new light that they have never seen before. They see it as just being something walking about on this earth; or they see it as being like an old tree stump — just something neutral and impersonal like that.

You mustn't think that your troubles come from the body. Although the body is a painful thing, the body itself is not really the cause of the suffering. The cause of our suffering comes from the fact that we've grasped at the body. The cause comes from inside, from the *citta* and the *kilesas* which cause it to cling to physical form. The body is simply part of nature, a neutral thing. And it goes the way of nature. And that natural way usually brings us a lot of *dukkha*. We have to just accept that and put up with it.

The mind is also part of nature. But the one that's behind it is the *citta*. In normal terms we can say that manifestations of the *citta* are what makes up the mind. In other words, the *citta* is what comes out in a moment of feeling, memory, thought, or consciousness. These four modes and the four modes of the *citta*. They are impermanent, they continuously arise and cease. It's rather like waves on water: when a wave goes up it must then drop down. It doesn't remain, it doesn't last. The waves of the *citta* are the waves of feeling, memory, thought and consciousness. These waves are just going up and down, up and down all the time. When a wave rises, it must fall. In the same way, feeling arises and falls all the time. It's the same with memory, thought and consciousness — they are all constantly rising and falling. They're completely impermanent. Always changing, and very fast too.

But the one underneath it, the *citta*, is not something you can point to. Mainly because the one who points is the *citta*. The *citta* is the one that knows. When you experience anything, it knows. If you see a color, you know that color. You can give it a name, but you can't really explain the sensation of experiencing that color to someone else. The same applies to feeling. When you get a particular feeling, you can say it's a sharp feeling or a dull feeling, but that isn't really an adequate explanation of your experience. All you are doing is telling someone else what brings about that type of feeling. The other person has to then put it into their own experience, and there's no way of knowing whether or not the two experiences are the same. That's because the experience of the feeling is a matter of the *citta*. It's the same with all the senses. You know how you yourself hear things, but you don't know if others hear those things in the same way. There's just no way of telling. This is the way of the *citta*. The *citta* is the one that's in the center. But, if you look for it, you can't find it. The more you look for it the less you can find it. You've just got to know it. You know it by sort of falling back into it — because you are it. You become it, so to speak. It's very difficult to explain.

One way of understanding the *citta* is by time. Past. Present. Future. Mostly we live in the past. We see something and by the time the mind has done the process, it's already in the past. So we're always in the past. We are always dealing with something that is more or less illusory. We predict the future, but only based on the past. Whereas, the reality is in the present. That's the only time it can be real. If you can get to that reality in the present moment,

then you get to the *citta*. The trouble is, when you try to get to it, it's very difficult because you are always dealing with something — some object, some sensation. When you are left dealing with some object like that, as soon as you deal with it it's already past. So to get to the immediate present is very difficult.

Most people think it's very strange about the *citta* and the pure *citta* of the Arahant, but it's not. Actually, that's what's normal. It's all the rest of us who are peculiar. We're all the peculiar one's — we're very strange. When you look at people, how they act, how they behave, even what they are — it's all very strange, the whole lot. We only think it's normal because we're used to it.

You can notice in the news media, it's always the bad things that make the news because somehow it's what people want to read about. Stories about goodness rarely make the headlines. If you see news about monks, it's always about what the bad monks are doing, never about what the exemplary monks are doing. That's not considered newsworthy. I suspect that happens because when people read about bad things they compare that with themselves and that makes them feel good. Whereas when they hear about good people it makes them feel bad or inadequate. There's a very ancient tradition in Buddhism that teaches us: don't think about evil, don't dwell on evil. Keep your mind on what's good. If you dwell on evil, it comes to you. This is the old principle. For instance, rehashing the bad things that have happened in the past is wrong and can be very harmful too because it tends to promote the same bad things in the present. People whose minds are of that type tend to copy, and that's not good.

Really speaking, people should try to review their own minds quite frequently. Whenever you have a minute, consider what you've been thinking about for the last 10 minutes or the last half hour. Look at your thinking and see whether it's really beneficial or not. It's quite a valuable practice to review your mind.

How often should we do walking meditation?

The frequency of walking meditation depends entirely on the individual. If you find that you get very good results from walking meditation, better than

from sitting, then you should do more walking. If you find you get better results from sitting, you should do more sitting than walking. But both are required because you can't walk all the time and you can't sit all the time. So you need to do some of both. But you should do whichever you find works best. Check the results. The tendency is, for somebody who tends naturally to be very calm, sitting often works better. For someone who is a bit restless, the walking meditation is usually better — perhaps not always, but usually. A person who is naturally calm can get in to a calm state rather easily when he sits down. Whereas the person who's restless just tends to get more agitated. The movement of the walking gives those people something to work with so the agitation goes into the walking then. You must experiment to find out which way works best for you.

There are several way to do the walking practice. One way is to keep doing the same practice you did while sitting. For instance, if you do the repetition of *Buddho* while sitting, you can continue doing *Buddho* in your walking practice. Or you may do the breathing practice while sitting, and you can adapt that to walking meditation. Using the breathing practice while walking is, however, a little more difficult than using *Buddho*, because it's harder to coordinate the rhythm of breathing and walking than it is the rhythm of *Buddho* and walking. On the other hand, you can do a completely different practice from your normal sitting meditation. You can examine the body while walking and later, while sitting, practice *samādhi*. There are many different methods you can use. Experiment for yourself to find out the best practice for you. That's the way of *kammaṭṭhāna*. The word *kammaṭṭhāna* actually means “basis of action” or “field of action”. The field of action is the whole of what we do in the field of meditation practice. In practicing *kammaṭṭhāna*, the idea is to be innovative. You have to think for yourself quite a lot. You must search for and find your own methods. When you come up against a problem in your meditation, you should think out the best way to overcome that problem. Often people who practice *kammaṭṭhāna* have their own unique meditation methods which are quite different from what other people do. You must learn to find tricks that help you to overcome the problems you encounter in the practice. Then you can work out the answer for yourself.

To begin with, you must start off by using the regular methods, because you don't yet know. But once you've become used to the regular methods, then

you can start searching about a bit more, trying to find some special methods that suit you personally. You eventually find out what works and you use it. You must always test new methods by the results they give. Do the results lead to more calm, more understanding? Or do they lead to less calm and less understanding? If the methods lead to more calm and greater understanding, they are probably worthwhile pursuing.

You must understand that the way of Buddhism is not a hard-and-fast system at all. The recommendations coming directly from the Buddha are probably the best because he took the nature of human beings into account. But they are not hard-and-fast. The whole of Buddhism is a method. And if one needs one can adapt those methods to one's own needs. One needn't practice exactly according to what the books say. Being a method, the Buddha's teaching is not itself an absolute truth. It is truth as far as the world goes, but absolute truth is something utterly beyond. You can't talk about absolute truth. In fact, the way of Buddhism is leading to absolute truth. Because the only way to get there is to adapt one's state to that. If one adapts one's state to that of absolute truth, then one can see absolute truth. So the training of Buddhism is, in fact, to get to that point. The absolute truth is Nibbāna, of course. So you have to adapt yourself to that condition. If you can adapt yourself to that condition, then it can arise. Otherwise, it cannot. The whole training is leading to that point. When we do the training, we start off from where we are — as ordinary people with ordinary understanding. So we have to work with that ordinary understanding to begin with. As we go on, we see that the ordinary understanding isn't sufficient. So we have to find new methods, new understanding, and more subtle ways of looking at things. It's not that the ordinary understanding is wrong, but rather that it's inadequate — it doesn't explain subtler conditions properly. There are many things in ordinary understanding that can't explain various anomalies that arise in meditation — things which don't fit with our ordinary understanding. For that reason, we need to discover a new way of understanding. After we've use that new method for awhile we find that it is no longer enough, so we develop a new way of understanding. In this way, we keep on changing our methods as we gradually progress in meditation.

To give you an example: Normally we think of the body as being physical. So we ask ourselves, "How do I know the body? What tells me I have a body? By what means do I know it?" When we investigate we realize that the most

important thing telling us we have a body is feeling. Feeling makes up over 90% of it. So actually, when we think of the body we think of feeling. By realizing that, our understanding has immediately gone beyond the normal basis of the physical body. To realize this clearly, we have to investigate it thoroughly – an intellectual understanding is not enough. In truth, we know the body by feeling.

Ajaan Mahā Boowa tells a story about a cave and a tiger. A man is living in a cave, and unbeknownst to him there's a tiger living in that cave as well. When he hears the tiger's growls coming from deep within the cave, he imagines them to be the sound of a lullaby lulling him to sleep. So he's happy and contented staying in the cave. Then one day he meets it face to face and, realizing it's a tiger, he flees from that cave as fast as he can. We are all a bit like that. We're all living in the world and we see only the pleasant side of it, we don't see the *dukkha*. The *kilesas* tend to make us overlook the *dukkha*. The past always looks more pleasant than it actually was. We remember the happy incidents and the pleasant things but we tend to forget the unpleasant one's. But when a person wakes up to see what it's really like, then he strives to get out of it because he no longer wants that. Mostly, it's hard for people to see the danger in the world because the *kilesas* search for and put forth various reasons to oppose the way of Dhamma. The *kilesas* also use feeling to oppose Dhamma. They make us think, "If I went that way, I wouldn't feel right, or I wouldn't feel happy." In that way, they view the way of Dhamma in a negative light. That's the way the *kilesas* are.

When we investigate the *kilesas* for ourselves, we must understand what is meant by the term "*kilesas*". Fundamentally, they mean greed, hate and delusion. But when we come to them in our own experience, we realize that the *kilesas* are mainly what we are and the way we think and the motives we have. That's where the *kilesas* show up. If we look at it carefully we'll find that it's the perspective of self that always causes the problem: "I think like this" or "I see it in this way". There is always self coming up, and the *kilesas* come up with self to push self higher, to make it feel stronger. The stronger the sense of self becomes, the more contented we are with our "self" image. But when it gets pushed up high like that, it can easily fall down. When it falls down, we experience *dukkha*. When we push self up very high, then conceit comes up. When the conceit is squashed, that's big *dukkha*. The *kilesas* are there to placate the self all the time.

The self is a construct of *avijjā*, ignorance. Actually, we talk about self in reference to subject and object. When we sense things, there's the one who's doing the sensing and the thing that's sensed. We see things: there's the thing that's seen and the one who's seeing it. And then we say, "I see that" and immediately we assume that there's some self that's seeing it. "I hear it" or "I think it", always the self perspective is coming into our experience. But in each case it's a different self that arises. The self that relates to seeing is not the one that relates to hearing; the one that relates to the external senses is not the one that relates to thinking or to memory, etc. Each time a different self arises.

In the end, when we follow the way of Buddhism fully, we have to give up all attachment to ideas of self. There are the three marks of existence: *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anattā*. *Anicca* is impermanence, constant change, the tendency for nothing to last, instability. *Dukkha* is discontent, because what's experienced all the time is not a basis for contentment. It's always changing, here's nothing that lasts long. We get something that seems very good, and before long it's gone. That's not a basis for contentment. And that which is changing and unsatisfactory like that can't be self. So there's no self in these things. How can there possibly be a self in what's changing? When it's all changing, the self is not the same thing for more than two moments together. It's changing all the time. The way of Dhamma is to realize that this is the case, that all of existence is characterized by these three marks: *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anattā*. Really seeing those clearly cuts away our attachments. Seeing those marks clearly, we won't have any attachment to anything because, how can you be attached to something which doesn't last. As soon as you grasp it, it's gone in the same moment. It's like trying to pick up water with a sieve — it just falls through.

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The Five Khandhas

It's the way of the mind to always be thinking, always be active. The way of the mind as we know it in the body, in the five *khandhas*, is to always be active. And it's active because of the *kilesas*. Even in the Arahant, it's active because of the *kilesas* that he had before which had set up the situation of the *khandhas*. Because this situation was previously set up by the *kilesas*, even in the Arahant these things still go on in the same way. Although he no longer has any of those tendencies coming from the *kilesas* because they're all gone.

Which *khandhas* become activated when we hear a sound? The sound comes in and that's received by *viññāṇa*, that's just bare sound. The sound is then compared with *saññā*, memory, which brings up the nature of the sound. It then goes to feeling: is this something I like or not? What is the associated context of this sound? What does the feeling tell me: is it pleasant or painful or what? This whole process is extremely fast; it's almost electronically fast. It goes through *viññāṇa*, which knows it, to recognition, which is *saññā*, to feeling, which tests it against past experience — all in an instant. Most sounds will have gone through the mind many, many times already. When the sound is something familiar, like a sound we hear all the time, then the situation is already built up in our memory, so that recognition arises immediately from past experience. That then predisposes the mind to bring up the feelings associated with that sound, whether it's aggravation or delight or whatever. It's at that point that the thoughts arise. Primarily the thoughts arise, thinking, "What shall we do with this feeling?" Then we react. The new *kamma* is created then when the reaction takes place. Our reaction will depend on that whole set of circumstances when the sound appears. When we are doing meditation and feeling rather calm our reaction will likely be quite different from when we are feeling agitated or upset. It depends on circumstances.

The thing we must see is how the mind is always changing. I remember when I was in England seeing flies coming up in the evening, swarms of them flying in the air. Those swarms would constantly form patterns which continually changed shape as the flies buzz about. The *citta* is like that, conditions are constantly pouring into it through the senses. The conditions are like those

flies — they form up the pattern of the *citta* at any one moment. So when you get a different set of circumstances you get a different form of the *citta*.

What is the function of *sankhāra* in this process? The *sankhāra* will start adding to this. In other words, when we begin thinking that the files are like the *citta*, that's the work of the *sankhāras*. Any addition to the bare experience of sense input comes in the realm of *sankhāra*. When we think of it in relation to something else, or when we consider it in the light of Dhamma, or when we wish it were this way or that way — that's all *sankhāras* coming up. *Sankhāras* always modify or change the original experience somehow. They become involved with it, so to speak.

Initially, sensory experience always has feeling associated with it. Feeling is the tester. When we have some sensation coming in, the mind tests it against feeling: is it pleasant, painful or neutral? And in what way is it pleasant, painful or neutral, because there are many degrees of feeling. There are many different kinds of pleasant and painful feeling to distinguish.

The whole process is extremely complex. Although in the five *khandhas* there are only five basic factors, their scope is enormous. The conditions that come up within them are really beyond reckoning.

To investigate the five *khandhas* we should first understanding the meaning of each of the *khandhas* clearly. What are their functions? If we understand their functions clearly, then we can see something of the way they work. Altogether we have the five *khandhas*, the six senses, and the body as the base. When we investigate these all together we can begin to see something of how the mind functions.

One thing you can do is go back and look at something that happened and ask yourself, "What did I do there? How did the mind work?" Probe like that. For instance, when you have a sewing machine and you want to know how it works: you turn the handle and observe how it works. You watch as it goes up and down again and again until you begin to understand the principle behind it. Then you see how all the moving parts work together. So to begin with we must get some understanding of how the five *khandhas* fit together. That's the *sutamāya paññā* and *cintamāya paññā*, the wisdom gained through learning and thinking about things. At that point, the investigation is set up

for *bhāvanāmāya paññā* , using meditation to go down inside to see how these things actually work.

Why is saññā translated as perception?

In the Oxford Dictionary, the word *perception* is defined as “the inner seeing or experiencing” of whatever comes into the mind. By virtue of that, the only one of the *khandhas* that fits that description is *viññāṇa*, not *saññā* — *saññā* is totally wrong. *Viññāṇa* is like the internal receiver, and that’s the nearest you can get to perception. In fact, everything that we know is perception; it’s a function of the knowing. True mindfulness is like a guardian at the door of the *citta*. So whatever comes in through the eyes, ears, nose, etc. the guardian knows it. It all comes in through one place, so if you have mindfulness there you are mindful of everything. The experience of that is an experience of being completely integrated with a very distinct feeling of calm. Still, there is thinking going on and all the senses are functioning normally, but you simply know everything. You feel as though you can know everything all around. In fact, what you know is what comes in.

With most of us, we feel our center of consciousness is up in the head. When it’s up in the head it’s easy to get tension developing. When the center of consciousness drops down to the heart, the tension disappears. We often don’t recognize this because we are conditioned to believe that thinking takes place in the head, as if the person we believe ourselves to be is located in the head. However, when the meditation goes right, the tendency is for consciousness to drop to the heart.

In thinking, we mainly think using words. We enter into a dialogue, as though we’re talking to ourselves, or to somebody else. This dialogue tends to go on and on in our minds. Let’s say some situation arises. The immediate impact of that situation is a clear, non-verbal experience. But then the mind tries to describe it, and it takes a long time and a lot of words to describe it, even though we already know in an instant that whole experience from beginning to end. So the whole mental exercise of describing it is simply a waste of time. But the *kilesas* can’t leave it alone. They feel they have to describe it, it’s part of their nature. On the other hand, when the center of consciousness drops down to the heart, all the words cease.

Words create a big problem. When the mind starts on some dialogue, with mindfulness we should be able to locate the Dhamma in that. It doesn't matter what it is, there will always be some insight into Dhamma there if we can only get at it. If we search for the Dhamma in it we can often find something valuable. For instance, we may hear that there has been a bomb outrage on a plane somewhere. The bomb explodes and the people on that plane all die. They weren't expecting death; they were completely unprepared for it. So we can think about how no one is expecting death, how no one is really prepared to die, and we can see the Dhamma in that tragic situation. We can reflect on the nature of *kamma*, and how life is always uncertain. In that way, we can always turn it to Dhamma.

One method that I have found effective, particularly when doing walking meditation with a lot of thoughts going on, is to imagine having a knife that can cut them off. While walking, you focus down inside. Then you keep your attention there and you watch for any thoughts arising to make sure that none of them escapes out into the world. You must be vigilant to catch any thoughts that might be coming up. When you catch some thought coming up you just cut it off, and it stops.

The other method is: instead of cutting off the thoughts, to just stand back and let them come and go like puffs of smoke. When they come up, you let them come, but you don't go after them. The arising of thoughts is quite natural, but the problem is that we grab hold of them.

So, to begin with, the best practice is to stop the thoughts. However, if you find that thoughts start coming and you can't stop them, then let them go on. But keep a careful watch on them so that you don't get caught up in them. The problem arises when you get caught up in them. Something intriguing comes up, and immediately you grab it and start thinking about it incessantly. Actually, thoughts are just like shadows — there's no substance in them at all. And yet they have a powerful affect on us. If we can keep the *parikamma* going and stop the thoughts for long enough our minds will drop into a state of calm. Then we'll realize just how harmful these thoughts are, just how much damage they can do.

The way of the *majjhimā paṭipadā*, the middle way, is to always counteract the *kilesas*. When you have something going on the side of the *kilesas*, then you

must put something on the side of Dhamma to counteract it, thus bringing it back to the middle. That's the proper way to correct it.

Before we built a wall around the monastery, Ajaan Mahā Boowa used to say that the stray dogs that came into the monastery were very good teachers. People living in the kitchen area would carelessly leave food lying about, and the dogs quickly gobbled it up. So Ajaan Mahā Boowa would scold them for not being mindful of what they were doing.

What is vimuttiñāṇadassana?

Vimuttiñāṇadassana is the actually seeing of the *vimutti*. Ñāṇa is like intuitive wisdom (*paññā*). It's direct seeing or direct knowing — you know it absolutely. If it's some function, then you know that function is either correct or wrong. You can't necessarily say why but you know it without a doubt. So *vimuttiñāṇadassana* is knowing perfectly the nature of freedom (*vimutti*). You could say that when *paññā* becomes very strong, it turns into nana. Nana is a state where you know absolutely. There's no question about it because you *know* it to be true. When you are doing meditation and something comes up, you *know* exactly what to do there. There's no uncertainty, you simply know what is right.

Language is necessary, but it's a big field for distortion. It's useful to study how language works, how it conveys meaning. Actually, language is just symbols, the whole lot. It's a symbolic process. We should observe how we use language as symbols for things. When we think of an object, we think of the word for the object, and that word stands for the object. And that's quite valid regarding objects in the world because they can actually be pointed to. But when we come to concepts like virtue, we can't point to it in the same way. Or we take an experience like *samādhi*: we can't point to anything concrete there so it's very easy for people to misunderstand the meaning and develop wrong ideas because they've never seen *samādhi* as an object. Because of that, a person with very little genuine experience can quite easily mistake what it means.

One of the greatest difficulties in explaining mind development to people in the West is that we just don't have the words needed to properly explain it to them. That's because the words and the concepts for what's being

discussed just aren't there in their minds. When they are not there in their minds, one can only explain step by step and so gradually build up those concepts. But only someone who knows what he's talking about can teach like that. Otherwise, the teacher just goes by what's in the books. Consequently, they don't really know what they're talking about, and the people listening don't understand what they're talking about either.

When talking about meditation there's always a difficulty of communication because we all have our own ideas and our own unique inner experiences. In the way we convey speech we have bring those concepts out into spoken words. Those words are sounds which others pick up and turn somehow into a meaningful concept inside themselves. They take that sound, that word, and refer it to memory (*saññā*) to find out what their ideas about it are in memory. What comes up depends largely on what one's background is. One can never be sure that any two people will understand a word in the same way. For instance, with feeling: how can you describe a feeling to someone else? All you can do is give some experience that brings that feeling about. You may describe it as a *sharp* feeling. What you mean is that it feels as though you've been pierced by something sharp. But *piercing* is an external action, not a feeling. Or with a hot feeling: it feels as though you've been contacted by something hot, which is again an external action and not an actual feeling. This is the only way we have of explaining to other people. Then we have to rely on the other person picking up on that description and turning it into understanding, based on their own understanding of experiences with things which are piercing and hot.

My own theory is: When everything is unconditioned in Nibbāna, then *at that level* there is no difference between one person and another. You can't say that there is a difference between people at that level. Because of that, at that level understanding can be conveyed directly. But it requires somebody who is at that level to fully comprehend that. Other people might be able to gain understanding it in that way, but then you have all the difficulty of turning that into ordinary thoughts. But because the *kilesas* are there in the mind, the thinking becomes distorted. There is the low way of explaining, which is ordinary speech; and there's the high way, which is much more accurate, but it's unformed. And trying to put it into form can be more damaging than the ordinary way of speech. In ordinary speech we use logic, reason, experience and memory. And although it's a bit of a make-shift, it

can gradually give results. But if the ordinary person tries explaining in the high way it usually turns out quite messy because there's so much scope for the *kilesas* to get in and distort things.

Sakāyaditṭhi has always been a puzzle for many people. My understanding of *sakāyaditṭhi* is that the view that “I am this body” is overcome. But it doesn't mean to say that the emotional reactions involving this body have been overcome. At that stage, the meditator knows perfectly well and accepts that this body is not “me”. Whereas, at the stage of *Anāgāmi*, the attachment to the body goes completely.

As one does the practice and gradually begins to get results, self-confidence arises and a kind of feeling of inner security starts developing. It can come quite quickly due to some strong event in one's practice. If meditation is strong and goes very deep, it can come about quite quickly. But usually it develops gradually as one does the practice — as the level goes higher, the stronger it gets. It starts at the level of getting calm and moves on to getting some form of *samādhi*. It gradually builds up from that to the practice of getting to know more and more inside. And getting to realize that, actually, everything happens inside — it's all inside. And the more one sees of that the more one realizes that the world is all a lot of shadows. With that realization, confidence gradually grows inside. What's happens is that one's views change. When one's views change, one's ways of thinking change also. As one's ways of thinking change, so the understanding gained from that percolates down to the *citta*, the heart. Gradually some of the *kilesas* become weakened. And that brings on more and more confidence because confidence comes from destroying *kilesas*. That's really what happens. When the *kilesas* are there it's almost as though the five *khandhas* don't belong to one because they're not under one's control. They are under the control of the *kilesas*. Because of that, one doesn't feel confident because one doesn't know what the *kilesas* are going to do next. But as the *kilesas* become more pared down and thinned out, things become more under one's own control. It's as though it's easier to control and easier to understand what's happening. So we feel more confident, and we feel more integrated generally.

Much like a young child, we may feel incompetent inside. Because we always like to feel competent, we try to avoid that incompetence. The overcoming of incompetence is much easier if we don't have hatred, because the energy

that arises to overcome that incompetence is wrongly directed when hatred is involved. The energy goes in all the wrong ways so one just gets into a tizzy.

A feeling of incompetence isn't itself the *kilesas*, but our interpretation of it as representing incompetence is caused by the *kilesas*. That incompetent feeling may actually be a state of going inward. Because you're going inward, you can't do very much in that state. That may be the way into *samādhi*. When you look at the way we are and the way we act, it's the *kilesas* coming up all the time. And they're always going outward: seeing this, seeing that; doing this, doing that; thinking about this person, thinking about that person. This gives you a feeling of being in charge, of being competent, of being able. They know what's going on around them. You know that this person is here and that person is there, this person is doing this, that person is doing that, and so on. So you feel quite competent. But, in fact, this isn't really correct – it's definitely wrong. This is the playground of the *kilesas*. When you then do the practice, and the *citta* wants to go inside, you can't be aware of those external things so you feel incompetence. So a feeling of incompetence can easily be associated with the way into *samādhi* because it's going in a direction away from the *kilesas*.

Ajaan Mahā Boowa says that when people listen to one of his discourses on Dhamma, they may begin to feel as if they are going to sleep. So they think, "I mustn't fall asleep. I must pay attention to what he's saying". And Ajaan Mahā Boowa tells them, "There you are. You start getting a bit of calm and then you break it all up". It's the same kind of thing. They are gaining a bit of calm as they gradually go down inside, then they think, "Oh, this is wrong. I shouldn't be doing this. "In that way, they break up the calm. In fact, the going inward is very important for them.

When we consider the questions that people doing meditation usually ask, you can reckon that 90% of them are merely the *citta* going out searching for things to ask questions about. Often it's because they just want to ask questions, or they want to display themselves. Very often people want to show that they are clever. So, in terms of the practice, their questions don't really mean very much. When you're earnestly doing meditation, you often find that you don't know what questions to ask. Questions can certainly come up, but unless the teacher is very experienced he may not be able to

answer them. For myself, I rarely ask questions of the teacher. Most of the questions that arise I can investigate and find the answer for myself. To ask questions of my teacher unnecessarily would be a waste of my time and his time.

But the understanding of oneself and one's *kilesas* is difficult because the *kilesas* are so integrated with what one thinks of as oneself. In fact, this *kilesa*-self is really an imposter. So the one asking the questions is just an imposter. It's making out that it's something that it isn't. It's making out that it is a permanent self. But it's not. It's just a lot of *kilesas*, that's all. When a real question comes up, it arises from within — there's something there one needs to know.

To see the Dhamma in things, you must go inward. When you read something while you're looking inward, then you see your own state and how it's ratified by that. You see the process as it takes place. For instance, when you read a book all you see are black marks on white paper. But due to *saññā* and *sankhāra* we derive a meaning from that.

There are three types of *paññā*: *sutamāya paññā*, *cintamāya paññā*, and *bhāvanāmāya paññā*. First, there are the books, learning from books. Second is working it out by thinking about it. The third is meditation where one actually sees it directly from experience. The books are very valuable; but, like they say in Zen but rarely practice, you shouldn't rely on books. It's like a map: even if the map is accurate, the natural features on the ground don't match the lines on the map. When combining books and meditation, you should assess how reading affects your practice. Generally speaking, the amount you need to read is probably quite small. When you're developing wisdom, reading may help more. But it won't help much in developing *samādhi*. In any case, if you feel it actually helps the practice, then try it. We always have to be on the search for things that help our practice. That's the right way. At the same time, keep a watch on the *kilesas* to see that they don't steer you in the wrong direction.

The practice of Dhamma is a method. You have to apply the method generally, but if, for instance, you're out on a trek somewhere, you may know the general direction you should be going in, but then you run into a thick forest and you have to find a way around that because trying to bash straight

through it is not the right way. It's much the same with *kammaṭṭhāna*, you know the general direction you should be going in, but at any one time you may find obstacles in your path and you must find some way around them. So you search for a suitable method to overcome them.

Obstacles for people practicing *samādhi*: you may work at *ānāpānasati* until you reach a point where you can't seem to get any further. So you think that perhaps you're doing the wrong practice and try *Buddho* instead. With *Buddho* you reach the same point and again don't get any further. If you then review your practice carefully you'll see that it's caused by something in you. The fault is not in the method. Then you realize that you must choose one method and stick with it diligently until you break through that blockage. Or you may find that you have no enthusiasm for the practice, as though everything is tasteless. You realize this comes from *kilesas*, so you try to find a method to overcome it. You can try reading something inspiring to give you renewed energy and enthusiasm for meditation.

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Dealing With Anger

It's the angry thoughts you have to stop. You must accept the feeling of *dukkha*. In other words, when you experience a tight feeling in the solar plexus that starts pushing up, you feel you want to get rid of it. You want to let it out. It's that feeling you have to accept. And you have to prevent thoughts of anger coming up. It's the thoughts that matter. Thought is *kamma*. And you must prevent the thoughts from flowing into speech and action. That's getting more and more coarse. But it's the thoughts that get things started every time. It's quite clearly stated in *paṭicca samuṇhāda*. We have the sense bases. Something comes up in the sense bases. There's *passa*, which is contact with the internal sense base, which in turn brings up an emotional state. Then there's the feeling which arises from it. Because of the feeling, *taṇhā* arises. *Taṇhā* here is the craving to get rid of an unpleasant feeling, or to perpetuate a pleasant one. Hate and greed are really two sides of the same coin.

Greed is wanting to get; hate is wanting to get rid of. In either case, it's still wanting. With hatred, the wanting is directed toward rejection, it always wants to get rid of. What we want to reject is a feeling that has arisen that we don't like. But that feeling is just a result of the past. The difficulty with hatred is that we must accept unpleasant feeling, and that can be quite painful. So we must go through a lot of *dukkha* to overcome that state. If we can succeed, we'll be left with a state where we have a very sharp mind, a mind where we see things very clearly. Especially *dukkha*, we'll see that very clearly. We'll also see clearly the nature of anger itself and understand how dangerous it is and how much damage it can do. Not only externally it does damage, but also within ourselves. Anger is hot and fiery. When we're unmindful it explodes out Bang! It spreads the fire all about. When you get two angry characters interacting, automatically each supports the other, so the anger comes up very, very easily. Because of this, you must stop the thoughts so they don't flow out into speech and action. If you can do that, when you meet an angry person, you can just turn away and not react. Even though the unpleasant feeling is still there within you, don't think about it and you'll be alright. In such cases, you need something to hold onto internally, and *Buddho* can work very well. To short-circuit angry thoughts,

go straightaway to the repetition of *Buddho*. If you've developed the *Buddho* practice then you can go to that and hold onto it.

You must break the chain of anger at the level of thinking. At the beginning, when feelings arise that trigger anger, it's probably best to go straight to the *parikamma* you usually use. And even if the anger subsides, don't try investigating feelings and thoughts at this point. Just keep on the *parikamma* until you can gain more control of your mind. What' you'll usually find is this: when you overcome the angry thoughts you relax your vigilance, and the *kilesas* quickly bring it up again. Because you're relaxed, you can easily get caught by another wave of angry thoughts.

The same applies to greed as well. When greed arises very strongly, focus on the *parikamma* and don't give attention to thoughts of greed. We need a refuge, something to hold onto. It's necessary.

We should know greed and know hatred when they come up inside us. And we should be able to distinguish between them. And we should realize that the feelings that give rise to greed and hate are not themselves greed and hate. The feelings are the results of *kamma*. So we must distinguish very clearly between the feelings that arise and the actual state of greed or hatred. The two are different.

One trick that Ajaan Mahā Boowa said he used is, when he found hatred coming up, he turned it against the *kilesas*. In that way, he made the *kilesas* the enemy, because they really are. So hatred of the *kilesas* is a very strong tool. Ajaan Mahā Boowa says that when people use a sharp knife, they should use the flat side on other people and the sharp side on themselves. But they usually end up using the sharp side on other people and flat side on themselves.

Thoughts themselves are one kind of *kamma*. The stopping of thoughts is also *kamma*. When you deliberately stop unwholesome thoughts, that's a form of good *kamma*. Acting deliberately requires volition – and volition is *kamma*. Anything done intentionally is *kamma*.

If one holds it at the level of no intention then one doesn't react to it. It's like a habit that comes up and that good intention will come up more easily

in the future. One has to have the intention to stop it. It's important, it's restraint. You're developing restraint.

Its *samvara*: restraint, holding back. The Buddha said that *kamma* is *cetanā*, volition. Feelings can arise without intention; they are a result of *kamma*. Nearly all the senses are results of *kamma*. Feeling is not *kamma* it's just feeling that's all.

Another thing to watch out for is with some characters you get feelings of worthlessness. This brings up anger very quickly with the diminution of self. The diminution of self brings that up straight away as the *kilesas* come up to try to defend that situation. If that comes up, the thing is to realize that that is just a feeling — nothing more than a feeling. Realize that one has to but up with it cause its *dukkha*. If one allows anger to overcome that or press it down all one's doing is making *kamma* for the future. The situation will come up again in the future stronger. If you can put out an anchor to hold the situation steady and not give way to it, it is reduced to that extent and starts getting less and less so you'll have better control of it. It's very important to do that because anger is strong and fiery. It can cause so much damage so quickly. On the other hand, if you go the right way, that can be turned to good use in the way of *Dhamma*. That can be very powerful.

If the feelings come up you can focus on the *parikamma*, but realize that these feelings are merely feeling and that's all. Don't suppress them, just let them be and keep on with the practice. If the *kilesas* start coming up recognize them, recognize what's happened and get back to the *parikamma*. Use restraint. It's very necessary.

Part of the *sīla* practice is the restraint that can control one in all situations. When you have that restraint strongly, it's very valuable and can help you an enormous amount. It can help in the world, in relationships with people, in driving a car — it's particularly important there. In things and events that happen around you, you always need restraint. Especially when people gather together in large crowds that crowd takes on a character of its own. Crowds are dangerous and because of that it takes on a much lower intelligence than the individuals. That's way crowds can get out of control very easily. Those who recognize this restrain themselves, and they realize they must get out of the situation quickly. They see that restraint is needed.

The way of Dhamma is really the way of learning to investigate yourself, look into yourself and correct yourself, because nobody knows you like you do. Since you know yourself from inside, even the best teacher can't know you as well as you do. Because of that, you are the best person to do it. Of course, a good teacher can suggest things. And a teacher of the caliber of the Buddha can probably see things that you can't see for yourself and use that to help you directly. Some of the Arahants can do that too, but not all of them.

When you have to deal with your own problems, you have to find your own methods. When you find your own method, it will be the right method automatically — because you have discovered it and adapted it to the situation as it exists. Because that method is specific to you, it may not be useful to anyone else, except in very general terms. For that reason, training and developing your capacity to investigate yourself is very important.¹⁶⁵⁶ To look and see, that's the way of mindfulness. If one can look inside and see what's happening all the time, get to know when things are arising. It's almost as if you get a warning signal when changes take place. When a change takes place... “What's that?” “What's happening?”.... “Why is that?” When you can focus inside like that, then you are not easily caught off guard.

In one *sutta* a *bhikkhu* who had done a lot of practice came to the Buddha and said: “I find everything distasteful.” The Buddha said to him: “This finding everything distasteful, is this distasteful to you also?” He answered: “How could it be otherwise?”

The Buddha praised him, saying: “Yes, you're doing the right thing, you're going in the right direction.”

That *bhikkhu* had a character rooted in hatred, although he was one who could see it clearly. Wherever he looked, whatever he looked at — he did not like it. He was never caught up with things. He never became attracted to things that would pull him outside. So he could stay inside and develop properly. Now that is rather a different case because that's somebody who's done a lot of practice. The average person who is *dosa carita*, rooted in hatred, having done very little practice, is more likely to go wrong.

The way of Dhamma is strange though because one's got to come to the level rejecting of things without letting it go into hatred. It's got to be done by seeing and understanding. It's so easy for people doing meditation to think that they should they should dislike the food they eat, that they should develop an aversion to food. That's wrong. It's not that we should dislike food, but that we should see it for what it is and realize that the pleasure that we get in eating it is merely a passing thing. There is no sort of essence there at all to truly satisfy us. That's really seeing the discontent in the world all the time, seeing the *dukkha*.

One sees that whatever one grabs hold of is not really satisfactory. Whatever contacts me is always separate. If you want a new television set how can you make it yours? It's always out there, separate. You can't eat the thing. It just remains out there. "It belongs to me" is only a way of speaking in the world. In fact there isn't any belonging in it and how can one stop it decaying, going wrong. Finally it gets thrown in the rubbish heap, thrown away. This is the way of things that we are attracted to. We want to make them belong to us. The idea of making things belong to us is really a fiction. It's not true. By investigating things in the world and investigating their nature we come to see this and the wanting tends to die away. It tends to drop away because of the realization "it's just there, it isn't mine, it doesn't belong to me. Even these bodies, these are not ours — they came from the world, they belong to the world and they go back to the world. They rely on the world. We have to have air to breathe, warmth from the environment. We're totally dependent on the world.

When we're dependent on these bodies and we think they're ours, the thought that they are ours is attachment to them. When there is attachment we're affected by what happens to them. When they get ill or grow old or something happens, they get injured we are very concerned, worried. The one that's concerned and worried is not the body — the concern comes from the *citta* inside. But it's not the *citta* that's hurt, the *citta* remains perfectly all right. If one can realize that the *citta* is what we call ourselves, and not the body or feelings or whatever else. If one can realize that difference, then one can let the body go and overcome the feeling that body is mine, so that whatever happens to it, one is never caught up in it. Not being caught up in it, one is free from it. When we talk about an Arahant it's not the body we mean, because that thing will just die away. It's not feeling, thought,

consciousness, none of these. These arise and die away all the time. It's the original *citta*, the final *citta* not the *citta* with *avijjā*. It's something we can't really talk about. We give it that name, but it's only a name. It's beyond all names, its total freedom – and you can't even imagine it. This is the one we call the *citta* is the one that matters. If one can learn to get to that one, then whatever happens doesn't matter. It doesn't matter at all – it's like a dream.

The *citta* cannot be equated to any of the concepts of the universe that we have. Whatever words and concepts we have are just images – and it's not that. There is no way to imagine it. It's beyond. When we say we can see it, that's only a way of speaking. My own understanding is that when we see beings like *devas*, or the other higher realms and the beings that live there, all we can say is they influence us. Then we produce our own image and fit it onto such things. So when we see such things, what we see is something of ourselves due to that influence. In fact, that is really what happens in this world. Things influence us so that we see them, but we're seeing them through ourselves. That is what happens, I think, in the other realms too. The whole of this is like a dream, including all the other realms too. This is getting rather high. The understanding of it is another matter – it's not easy.

Ajaan Mahā Boowa said when he was doing the practice before he met Ajaan Mun at Wat Yothanimit near Udon Thani. He asked his *upajjhāya* what practice he should be doing and his *upajjhāya* said the *Buddho* practice. He did it and before long he got into *samādhi*. Then he went to do it again and he couldn't get into it. He said the *dukkha* was terrible because he knew what he wanted and if he had never got there he wouldn't have had nearly so much *dukkha*. He went on trying for about a year but couldn't get there then he came to the conclusion that “all I can do is just go on regardless of what happens. I am not going to expect any results at all whether I get results or not. I am just going to go on with it.” He went on with it like that and after while he attained *samādhi* again. Then he realized what his fault was, instead of trying to do the practice of *samādhi* he was thinking of the results all the time. That's the trouble; one thinks of the results and expects the experience. One's got to think of causes not effects, not results. That's the way to do it. One's got to go on regardless. One's got to keep one's mind on what one's doing. It's like any work, if you're always thinking only of the results, then you're bound to make a mess of it.

Comments on methods of letting go of things.

Restraint is a defense against the *kilesas*. When the *kilesas* come up one is pulled in a certain direction. One has to pull in the opposite direction. Restraint is what does that. As to letting go, that's not really a letting go — that's a defense. It's a holding on to the situation so as not to let it get out of hand. That's really what it is. When it comes to real letting go, that comes from wisdom, that comes from seeing. When you see truly the nature of something, then it's blown wide open, so to speak. That's very difficult form restraint. Restraint is necessary to overcome the grosser and more difficult problems that one comes up against. It's a matter of level. Restraint is not meant for letting go. Whatever one's overcome with that restraint one can't say that one has let it go and it won't come up again.

Whereas, if you've seen it with wisdom, it won't come up again. An important point about letting go is this: many people say "all you've got to do is just let go". But you can't. I like to think it's like an ant on the ceiling that wants to get to the floor. All it has to is let go but it doesn't know how to let go. All it knows is how to put one foot in front of the other... or six feet in front of the others. If you succeed in letting go in your practice, all you will do is grab hold of something else. When you let go of one thing you'll grab hold of another. This is the way of the *kilesas*. When one does the practice by training and investigating until the insight comes, then there isn't even any trying to let go. You just find you don't want those things — that's all. It's let go of already. That is the true letting go.

I am not saying you can't give up cigarettes for instance. You can. Even there, the craving to go back to them is still there. It takes along time before that dies away. Even when the desire fades away, if one's not careful one can easily go back to them. Whereas the real letting go is when one doesn't even have a desire to look at cigarettes, it never comes up. The trouble with letting go is it seems easy. It looks as though it's easy, but it isn't.

It seems to us that other people's problems should be very easy for them to let go of their problems. From our own point of view we think: "why can't that person do this or why can't he do that".

How should one deal with anger?

The thing is to see anger. See it more and more. When you get to know it you can do something about it. When anger comes up it comes up as feeling and it's very strong. When one's been used to letting it come up like that what happens is then the thoughts come up. Thoughts of anger come up. Whatever it is, they pin on something or somebody and the anger will be directed. That's the thing you've got to stop. Those feelings when they come up, those you can watch and realize that those are not anger. They're unpleasant and the tendency is to give way to anger because if you don't give way to anger there is this feeling of loss as though there's a sort of loss of self. The *kilesas* don't like that at all. That's the thing one has got to put up with and accept. If one can learn to accept that, then that's good. When these feelings come up what you have to do is recognize them first and realize these are dangerous. You can see it's like fire and get some water quickly. Don't let your thoughts get caught up in anger. If there is any tendency to think: "oh that person is to blame", then turn away from that person altogether, don't think about them; or else, realize that that person has many good points also. That's the way to see it. If you can see it more and more like that, you will gradually get more of a hold on anger.

Working on the anger requires mindfulness. Mindfulness is the thing you need. If it turns toward depression the cure for that is to stop thinking. Just level it at the level of feeling. The thing is whatever happens there, the anger comes up then you get a depression coming, it's quite likely. One tends to follow the other. These are just resultant things coming up. Realize these are not what matters. They're not *kamma*, they are the results of past *kamma*. It's your thoughts that matter. If you can turn away from thoughts of anger, or thoughts of depression, the problem will just die away.

Be careful of the *kilesas* that come up and say "I am doing pretty well". Be careful there is a tendency for that to come up. The thing is to realize that if you can stop thoughts, all that stops and the whole thing is clear. The whole problem disappears. It's the thoughts that keep going all the time. You're thinking all the time. Thinking is mostly in words. Language, words, dialogue going all the time.

The feelings don't suddenly go but each time you deal with it, it will get weaker. You can look on it like “drying out” after drugs. It’s rather like that – to get off drugs you have to go through a lot of difficulty. It’s very much the same thing though this has got to do with the mind and not a material thing.

For a moment I saw people as different they were just lumps of flesh walking around. I was a bit afraid.

Don't push that at the moment because if there is a tendency for that to come up well okay, but let it come up in its own time. That’s important, its good, but don't push it too much because that can bring the *kilesas* up more and at the moment that isn’t the right thing to do.

There seem to be so many interruptions during my practice.

The thing is to realize whether people interrupt or not we can still do the practice. That is to say, that the practice is done inside oneself. If one keeps one’s mindfulness one is doing the practice. Ajaan Mun said to Ajaan Mahā Boowa: “If you’re being mindful you're doing the practice. If you're not being mindful, it doesn’t matter how much you are sitting or walking, you're not doing the practice.”

It’s not good to do too many things all at once. When we start doing the practice we are like a child learning to walk. If the child tries to run it just falls over. It’s like that with us, if we try to do too much all at once the focus just breaks up, so we can't do it properly. So the thing is, do one thing at a time. Try to get the breathing deep first of all. When you get some success with the breathing practice, then you can learn how to use that with the investigation to develop wisdom. As Ajaan Mahā Boowa says: you should get some control or ability in *samādhi* first. Then when you start investigating the body to get wisdom, then the *samādhi* gives you a rest.

Can we take everything coming up as a teacher to make us more mindful?

Yes its well worth watching these things that one can learn so much from little things like that the way one should work and act.

I see my mind as not questioning either the inner or outer environment. It's just used to them.

Being used to something, is just strong memory. When that memory is there you always feel you know the environment, and what to expect in the environment. We know... "The sink is over there". We don't have to think about it. If we check and find the sink is no longer there, then where has it gone? Then the doubt comes up immediately. This is why the mind in the environment is constantly moving about looking for changes. It's really bringing us up-to-date, the environment up-to-date.

Limitations of the mind.

One thing that we should realize is how limited the mind is, the limitations of the mind. It is not, as some people think, capable of doing everything. Far from it; though with the final *citta* that has gone beyond, that maybe a different matter, I don't know. The mind as we know it is very limited. It's got definite limitations as to what it can do. We can see its methods of overcoming some limitations. If you get into an environment and you get to know that environment. At first that environment is unfamiliar and you look around and learn. When you learn it you can then consign the whole of that to a symbol. It's like what we do on the computer when we put everything under one heading in the directory. Then all we need to refer to that environment is just that symbol. It can be a word but it's also a certain knowledge inside oneself.

This making up of symbols is very important because it frees the memory to be used in all sorts of other ways. Otherwise, if we had to remember everything, our brains would have to be enormous to hold it all. One can see that there is a limit to it because we then tend to deal with the symbols. But the main trouble of that is, we then start giving the symbols a reality. This can be a cause of delusion very easily. I think this is part of what's behind making of self. We get something very complex, like another person, and we give that person a name. Then we just think of the name. But the reality of that person is really very complex. We've got sort of an idea of that person, but our idea doesn't take into account the changes in the way that complex person does things. How he is changing all the time.

Mindfulness. If one is really mindful, the mind is watching where the *citta* is going all the time. If it's watching where the *citta* is going, it will see the changes in things that are taking place all the time.

This comes from living in the present. When one relies on the past one relies on memory. Relying on memory means one feels secure in that memory. It means one feels secure that one remembers is still there, which is relying on permanence. You have to realize that things are not permanent, that they change. We've got to accept change even though we've got things that are fairly solid like this post, for example. The time will come when that will change also. There are other things that are changing much faster. One has to be prepared for whatever happens. A little insecurity is being prepared all the time. Get ready to accept whatever happens and notice it and know. People have the idea that they're secure. Being in a car is an excellent example. Most people jump into a car and feel completely secure, but there's no reason for feeling secure riding in a car — there is always danger in that. Because of that, whenever you travel by car you should keep in mind that: "This is not so secure. Anything could happen here."

How many people really believe that they may die in the next five minutes? Very, very few. But that happens to people — they just die like that! Five minutes before, they never even thought about it. A monk who used to stay with Ajaan Lee came here with some people a short while ago. They came here and then they went off. The car then had an accident. The driver was killed and the women were all killed. The monk was injured, but not very badly. No one expected anything to happen.

The transferring of merit is not the same as the transferring *kamma*. When a person makes *kamma* that person, or that *citta*, will receive the results of it. It must come back on the owner. It won't come back anywhere else. If one dedicates merit to someone else, then that dedication is actually an act of *kamma* on our part, *kusala kamma*, good *kamma*. That can help that person in some ways. Ajaan Mahā Boowa said it's rather like teaching somebody something. When you teach them something, they gain from that what they've learned but you don't loss anything by it.

You can't transfer *kamma* to anyone. No way. Otherwise if there was somebody a person liked very much, they'd say: "I'll take on the *kamma* of that person". But you can't do it. Suppose you have a gun and you shoot it toward something. Once that bullet leaves the gun, there is nothing you can do about it. You can't stop it. That bullet will find its mark. *Kamma* is rather like that: once you've done it there is nothing you can do about it. It'll come back to us and find its mark. If you like, it is yourself in the future that bears the bullet.

What is the value of sending mettā?

If the person you're sending it to is in bad shape or their mind is bad, then they won't receive it. Ajaan Mahā Boowa in 'Paṭipadā' tells a story of a Bhikkhu that had trouble with a woman who was a ghost. The bhikkhu is telling Ajaan Mahā Boowa the story and Ajaan Mahā Boowa asked "didn't you give *mettā* to her?" He said "yes, but she wouldn't receive it". She was there and could have received it but because of her hang ups inside, what the trouble is, she couldn't accept it. She refused to accept it. If a person is open to accepting it, they can. But in this case, no. *Mettā* is the most powerful practice of the lot. *Mettā* is the strongest thing and because of that a lot of people are frightened of *mettā*. They don't know how to behave. If you have *mettā* for someone what you're doing by having *mettā* for that person is putting your own *citta* into a state of *mettā*. This is the important part. If the *citta* is not in a state of *mettā* then you won't help anyone else. By the attitude of having them in mind that can have an influence on that person. By the power of that influence their minds can be put in the same sort of state. Then they can build up good *kamma* on that. The *mettā* is an influence on that other person. Some people get the idea they're *mettā* broadcasting stations. They don't realize that the *mettā* first of all must be inside. You get these people who say they are going to have a day of special meditation to bring peace in the world.

Choosing a religion.

Some people are not clever. A clever person will think about religion. They think "what religions are genuine and which aren't?" the probability is that those who have lasted a long time will be more genuine than those that haven't. That's all you can say. If there is a lot, then they'll start looking

about for religions that have lasted for a long time. I know in the West now there are sects in Christianity, and other religions also, which are growing one after the other and bring in new ideas and putting them together — just picking up things. This is very bad because when they think up thing like that it just comes from a conceit that this hasn't been thought up before. In fact there is usually nothing new in them at all. You can't find anything new really. That's because the human mind is limited. We all stuck within the limitations of the human mind.

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Overcoming the Kilesas

When you are trying to overcome the *kilesas*, there is always a battle, there's always a fight going on. Because of that, you can assess the validity of what you are doing when you see the *kilesas* are coming up all the time. There is a reason why they come up. The reason is that you are trying to do something about them. In this case, the enemy doesn't attack unless you are attacking it. Giving way to the *kilesas* is easy, but it doesn't help. It doesn't go in the right direction. But refusing to go the way of the *kilesas* brings up all sorts of troubles and difficulties. So, when you meet with difficulties in the practice you shouldn't be too down-hearted, because it means you've got something to work on, something to do. You have encountered something that you must overcome. If you accomplish that work, you will gain by it. So work hard. But remember: the work is difficult, it's not easy.

Ajaan Mahā Boowa talks about two methods for developing *samādhi*, for developing Dhamma. The first is the usual method where you practice *samādhi* first. When the mind can hold its attention on whatever you put it on, then you turn to investigating for the development of *paññā*, or wisdom. That is one method; and for many people that's the way they must go.

The other method is the method of wisdom develops *samādhi*, where you develop wisdom by investigating and thinking. If you continue on until you become absorbed in that investigation, *samādhi* will develop. It depends on each individual which way they must go. Generally speaking, we can say that if you can keep your attention firmly on the investigation, then you can probably go the way of wisdom develops *samādhi*. If you can't, if your mind jumps about and won't keep on what you are investigating, then you must do the *samādhi* to develop wisdom.

Also, you have to assess your own character. Those who have a lot of emotional instability should develop the *samādhi* first, because that makes them calm, which brings a certain contentment and happiness inside. When they have the *samādhi* developed then they take up the investigation and come to understand things which otherwise would have caused some trouble. Some of the things that the investigation brings up are things that cut directly against the *kilesas*. The *kilesas* will cause trouble then. For those

who are emotionally not very stable, it can cause a lot of trouble. So one has to be cautious there.

For most people, it's necessary to get some success in *samādhi* first. After that, they can develop the investigation. The *samādhi* is what brings one an initial state of calm, a feeling of contentment and happiness. That is valuable. Then one can turn and do the wisdom practice that cuts the *kilesas* and gradually gets rid of them. That's where the real work begins. In the way of Dhamma, getting rid of the *kilesas* is the real work.

How do the perfections (pāramī) come in with that model?

If you are lacking in any of the perfections you need to develop that special quality in order to overcome the *kilesas* which are its opposite. If you lack patience, for example, then you probably need to develop that perfection. Those who lack patience are always looking for results. But looking for and anticipating results prevent those results from coming up. One is looking for the results without looking at the causes for those results, so the results don't come up. This can easily happen if you lack patience. In that case, you may need to develop patience. The method of developing patience is to forget about the results and just keep on doing the practice, because that's what you need to do to develop the right causes. Keep on doing it. Keep the attention where it should be – which is on the causes.

If, for instance, the perfection of generosity is lacking when one turns to do the practice, one will think about one's possessions all the time. One can't get them out of one's mind. By practicing generosity, one's grasp on one's possessions will loosen, so that one no longer holds tight. In a similar way, developing the other perfections will overcome basic character faults.

When we look at it carefully, we can see that the way of Dhamma is quite logical, quite straightforward. There is good reason behind the whole of it. It's not just an arbitrary teaching. The whole of it fits together kind of like a gear box where all the gears just fit together as they should. That is the way of Dhamma.

What were the other perfections?

Generosity, patience, moral virtue, loving kindness, wisdom, renunciation, effort, truth, determination and equanimity.

When doing the practice we tend to forget the list when dealing with immediate problems coming up in the practice. Though, it is useful to look back at the books every now and then, to check up on things. You shouldn't throw the books away. They're valuable, but you shouldn't be looking at them all the time either. Only when one has gone way beyond books can one throw them away. But until then one shouldn't. You must understand that the books do not tell you everything. The *sutta piṭaka* is very valuable, but it's the bare bones of Buddhism. We must put the flesh on it ourselves. It gives us the right basis but we must do the work to make that real within ourselves, instead it of being just a lot of text. Some people go far too much into the books, working out charts and diagrams to explain Buddhism. That's going too far.

Those that do not know correctly and show off that they know are worst than those that don't know anything.

Yes, because those that do not know correctly have a sort of added delusion. It's *avijjā* that is distorting in some way what they know.

The books are good in that we refer what we read to ourselves, to our own experiences: Do I understand that, and if not, what does it mean? We see things in the *suttas* and we ask: "Have I done that or not"? And we must be strictly honest with ourselves, that's awfully important.

There is a lot of helpful information for meditation practice in the *suttas*. In fact, there is so much information that it can be hard to find what you're looking for. The *suttas* can be a great help, but you must not use them merely as a distraction. When people begin doing meditation, they seem to find all sorts of excuses why they should be doing something else. They use what seem like some of the best excuses in the world. For instance, they feel they would rather give donations and make merit; or, they don't want to walk meditation because they fear they might disturb someone else. Their motives appear very good. But if they look at what's behind them very clearly and

closely, they will realize that they simply don't want to do the practice. So they must overcome that. Actually, doing meditation is the best merit one can make. There is nothing better than that because the merit of doing the practice is leading directly toward Nibbāna; however little one goes, it's still leading in that direction. Whereas the other types of merit just lead to rewards in this world here and now. They don't lead *directly* to Nibbāna. They mostly make life in this world a little bit easier that's all. So the practice is really the thing to do. We've got the advantage in Buddhism that the correct way to practice is clearly laid out. Other religions don't have the way, nothing is clearly set out. So they sort of stumble along in the dark.

Ajaan Mun was asked: "What is the test if a teaching is Buddhist or not?" He said: "If it teaches the Four Noble Truths, it's Buddhism."

Though everything may be included in the Four Noble Truths, the teaching of them is not found outside of Buddhism. The Four Noble Truths encompass everything, but that's for the person who is practicing to find out. You can't find that teaching in other religions.

People in the West practice various religions. They have Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Islam and all sorts of peculiar religions that people made up, which are mostly rather a mess. When you look at it, all people are in fact trying to overcome *dukkha*, trying to overcome discontent. Whatever we do, whether we're Buddhists or not, that's what we're trying to do. Discontent is present because the cause of discontent there. The cause of *dukkha* leads directly to *dukkha*. These two factors are the first two factors of the Four Noble Truths. These two factors exist in all of us. But although everyone in the world is trying to overcome *dukkha*, very few people actually see what is actually happening. How many people in the world actually realize that *dukkha* is the big problem? They have so many problems on their minds, but they never see the truth about what the key problem really is. The key problem is always *dukkha*.

After all, whenever we want anything there is automatically discontent present, because if there wasn't discontent, we wouldn't want it. Because of that, the wanting of anything immediately creates discontent. Then we have to find out how to get that the thing we want, and that's hard work, which is more *dukkha*. This applies to everyone in the world. The Buddha saw that

dukkha is the key factor, the key to the whole lot. Everybody is always searching for a way to overcome discontent. So the Buddha taught the first two Noble Truths to indicate the wrong way or the wrong direction everybody is headed in. When people are always discontented, they are always searching for ways to overcome *dukkha*. But they're always looking in the wrong direction, which means focusing outside of themselves to look for a cure for their discontentment. We all try to correct everything outside in the world without realizing that the cause of *dukkha* comes from within ourselves. So we are always going in the wrong direction. The Buddha then he taught the third and fourth Noble Truths as being the right direction. The third Noble Truth is the overcoming of discontentment leading to *nirodha*, the cessation of *dukkha*. He also taught the causes which lead to the cessation of *dukkha*, which comprise the Eightfold Path. It's a matter of cause and effect in both cases: one is the wrong path; the other is the right path.

The Eightfold Path is the basis of Buddhist practice. You shouldn't think of it as a path where you practice right views first, then right attitude, then right speech, action, and livelihood. It's not like that. That is not the meaning of the Eightfold Path. The meaning of the Eightfold Path is that you must train yourself in all these factors simultaneously until they reach the level of the Path. When all of these factors are almost perfect then they all come together to make the Path moment, which can be *Sotāpanna* or *Sakadāgāmī*, etc. All of the Path factors come together at that moment. Only when all these factors are all present, and strong enough in the right way, can the path be made and the person reaches that attainment.

The whole of the teaching of Buddhism is training. It's a method. The Buddha didn't teach absolute truth, because you cannot teach absolute truth — it's beyond words. What he taught is a method, a method by which we can train ourselves to attain the perfection of the path, and so overcome and destroy the *kilesas* within us, which is the path leading to Nibbāna. It's a method. You can find a philosophy in it if you like, but it's not meant to be that. It was never meant to be a philosophy. It's not mere theory that you should play about with using words and arguments and discussions — it's not like that. You should not look for absolute truth in it either. It's simply a method — a method set up by the Buddha to suit human beings, to lead them from their present state to that of Nibbāna. That's the whole of the teaching. Because of that, it's open to everybody to take up that method as they see fit

according to their own character, and where necessary to modify it here or there to suit themselves. This is the way of *kammaṭṭhāna*. When doing the practice, you will find problems coming up that you can't find answers for in the books. Because they are individual matters, they cannot be found in books. So then you must search within yourself to find what resources you have to overcome them in your own way. This is what we all must do.

How can you know that your solution isn't from the kilesas?

You can't. We all make mistakes but when we look back later we will probably see where we went wrong. That's all. We have *kilesas* coming up all the time, and we are deceived by them time after time. The only thing we can do is to try to realize their tricks by using mindfulness to recollect and see what happened. We realize: "Oh, I've been deceived by them, I need to be more careful next time." We can't aim for perfection right at the beginning. That only comes at the end. We have to start off where we are, there is nowhere else.

The main problem is people's view of the importance of the world. To most people, it's the world that matters all the time, to such an extent that they forget themselves. They forget the importance of this body in the world. It's interesting you made have heard of George Soros, he's a financier, a very rich man. An article in Time Magazine said that when he started off he found some tricks how to make money and he was very successful at it and made a lot. Then as he was walking along one day he felt heart pains. He assumed it was heart trouble. He suddenly thought: "Here I've made all this money. Supposing I die now, what use is it?" So he started giving it away. He became very generous. But most people, even if they have heart trouble, wouldn't think of giving their money away. They just think about the value it has in the world all the time. After all, when one dies, what's left? All one's possessions and one's money are gone. All one is left with is one's *kamma*, good or bad as it maybe.

This morning Ajaan Mahā Boowa was talking about uplifting the citta.

Yes, to raise the *citta*. If you want to uplift the *citta*, the right way do it is firstly by meditation and secondly by observing the way you think. Watch your thoughts. Thoughts are very important. Most people think feeling is

important because feeling brings us *dukkha* or *sukkhā*. But feeling is the result of *kamma*, it's not the *kamma* itself. Whereas thought makes the *kamma*, thought is *kamma*. It's so easy to think about this or that. We don't realize that when we're thinking we're making *kamma* all the time. So you should look where your thoughts go and realize what sort of *kamma* you are making. Learn to review your thoughts, just to check: "What have I been thinking about? Where has my mind been? What's it been doing?"

Even though we may try to check our actions and speech to make sure they are good so we don't break *sīla*, when it comes to our thoughts, we usually let the mind go pretty wild.

Thoughts are not *sīla*, they are not morality. Thoughts come under the level of *samādhi*. The reason for that is, action and speech are what affect us as far as the world goes. They are what affect the world. They are what relate to other people. If those are correct, things are correct on the level of the world. But our thoughts are personal. If they do influence other people, it happens in such a way that they don't know about it, so it isn't upsetting to society. Because of that, the level of thought is higher than that of speech and action, so it doesn't come under the heading of *sīla* at all. If you look at the five *sīla*, they are all concerned with speech and actions — none of them are thought. Thought comes at the level of *samādhi*.

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Practice of the Ajaans

I've just been going through the *Paṭipadā* to check the translation. It's somewhere near the state of printing. Once I've checked it through and got all the corrections done, there is only the introduction and the glossary to do. It should be finished soon. The *Paṭipadā* is a companion to the Biography of Ajaan Mun. It's called "The *Dhutanga Kammatthāna* Practice of Ajaan Mun". *Dhutanga* is the ascetic practices. It goes into the practice of Ajaan Mun and many of his disciples. It's pretty comprehensive. Ajaan Mahā Boowa wrote it.

Did Ajaan Mun write anything himself?

There seems to be some uncertainty about that, perhaps one or two things, but there is nothing that is guaranteed to be Ajaan Mun's writing, as far as I know. There are some of his talks that somebody wrote down afterwards. The trouble is, when somebody does that, you never know how accurate their memory is. They often bring in things that weren't really said or they understood what was said in a certain way that is not quite right. You can never be sure. According to Ajaan Lah (he's in Pu Jor Kor, near the Mukdahan toward the east from here), if you listen to Ajaan Mahā Boowa's teaching, it's the same as Ajaan Mun's. You can say it encompasses everything Ajaan Mun taught so it gives you a pretty good idea of what Ajaan Mun taught. Apparently Ajaan Mun's teaching was sometimes very fierce.

At the moment I've reached the place where he (Ajaan Mahā Boowa) gives the partial story of Ajaan Khao, who lived in Wat Tham Klong Pain. He was very good, very good indeed. When Ajaan Khao left his village, none of the villagers there wanted him to go. They said: "You can't do anything nowadays, it's all finished. The time when people gained enlightenment is long past now. The best you can do is read the books, learn from the books and become a good scholar." He didn't say anything but he thought to himself: "These people don't know the way of Dhamma. They're talking about Dhamma like this but they don't know. It's what they say I should listen to, but what the Buddha said". Eventually he left, he went wandering *dhutanga*. He walked from his village in Ubon to That Phanom, about 150

miles, looking for Ajaan Mun. He didn't find him there. Then he walked from there to Udon, and he didn't find him there either. He heard Ajaan Mun was in Changmai, so he went up there, walking along the Mekong River then across to Changmai. Eventually he caught up with him, but Ajaan Mun wouldn't let him stay with him to begin with. He'd talk Dhamma to him, he'd teach him, then he'd say: "You go off on your own. I don't want anyone to stay with me". So he had to go off and do the practice on his own. He went on practicing what Ajaan Mun taught him for about 3 or 4 years. Then Ajaan Mun said: "Alright, this rains retreat period you can come and stay with me". After that he stayed with Ajaan Mun every rains retreat. He attained enlightenment; one can say that without a doubt. He taught at Wat Tham Klong Pain, which is about forty miles from here. I met him several times. I was never taught much by him though I met him several times. In the *Paṭipadā*, Ajaan Mahā Boowa explains how he practiced. His practice was very strict and very strenuous too. In the forest he had three *caṅkama* paths made for walking meditation. He called one the Buddha, the second one Dhamma and the third one Sangha. He'd go to the Buddha path and he'd look on his walking meditation as praise to the Buddha. Later he went to the second path, where he walked in praise to the Dhamma, then to the third path in praise to the Sangha.

He said when a person lives in a place for awhile they get use to that place. Once they get use to a place they feel comfortable. When they feel comfortable they don't mind letting their mind wonder. So he said what he use to do is stay in a place for a short while and then move. It didn't matter where, just a short distance away was enough. He'd go at night and stay at one place, then he'd move to stay at another place. When he felt that he was getting too used to that, he'd go somewhere else. He kept on doing that all the time and he found that he got good results. He found that he could keep his mind under control and keep the *kilesas* down. The way he practiced was really quite strenuous. Very few people can do it as strongly as he did. Nowadays you rarely find people who can do it like him, very few.

I've gotten the impression we should be practicing ten hours a day, and I feel like I am just settling in.

If you're use to doing ten hours a day, that's one thing. But to think that you can come directly from an ordinary lay life and do ten hours of meditation

practice a day in a short period of time, that's too much. That is something one has to develop gradually. Do what you can, that's all. When you're not doing the meditation practices of sitting or walking, try to keep your mind from wandering around all over the place. Just try and keep it on what you're doing at the time. That's always good.

It seems quite important to get on well with the Thai people here.

You should use wisdom here. It's okay to get on with the people and you may have to give way a little on this, but when it comes to the practice of Dhamma you must realize it's your own life, your own *citta*, and you must try to purify it by yourself. No one else can do it for you. Because of this, it's not good to give way too much. Giving way a little bit for courtesy's sake, that's alright. But you mustn't give way too much. Keep the attitude: I've got to do the practice. If you asked Ajaan Mahā Boowa that, he'd say not to do the cooking. Look on the practice as being the thing you should do. That's the important thing.

How would you describe wisdom?

Wisdom is evaluating the situation to see what is necessary to keep the relationship level, not letting things get out of balance. Using wisdom in the world often means we have to work out some clever method of doing what's necessary. There usually are clever methods. If someone asks you a question that you don't want to answer, there is usually a way to get around it without telling a lie. It's alright doing this, as far as morals go there's nothing wrong in it. It's far better doing that than telling a deliberate lie. I like the Thai method of this, when you ask a Thai: "What do you think this or that?", the answer is "Yes".

Meditation practice is not easy, and the reason is the *kilesas*. If it wasn't for the *kilesas*, everyone could succeed at meditation practice. There would be no problems at all. But the *kilesas* always come up to cause trouble, pulling us this way and that way. Many people don't know what the *kilesas* are and how they arise. The *kilesas* are really oneself — what one thinks of as oneself. It's from the *kilesas* that one has built up the whole of oneself. The *kilesas* have been the leading light. When looking at ourselves, we think of ourselves as being in an environment, the environment of the world. We think of

ourselves in relationship to all sorts of external things. In large part those relationships are dependent on the *kilesas*. Because of that, what we've built up as our "self" has a certain balance to it.

The trouble is, this balance doesn't remain constant. Things come to upset it. And that upsets us. When we're upset, we feel we must do something to bring the balance back again. Very often our method of bringing the balance back again is more *kilesas*. For example, a person is upset by someone, so he gets angry. Anger is his way of trying to bring the situation back into balance. The *kilesas* are always pulling back inside, trying to keep that balance of oneself. When we examine that and see it properly, we will learn how we should act. The right way to act when that balance is upset is to know the situation with mindfulness and then reckon: "I must avoid doing anything that's coming from the *kilesas*. If necessary, I've just got to put up with it. Let it go". We accept the situation. By accepting it, we do not make more *kilesas*, and thereby strengthen them. This is important because by not reacting to them we learn that not reacting causes the least problem and the least trouble. Eventually everything dies away. Instead of everything getting hotter and more up in the air, things go smoothly. It also means building up a habit of not reacting. I don't mean that if someone's a real nuisance you can't put on a show of anger. If you can do it with out actually getting angry, then it doesn't matter — like making a show of anger to a child, just to bring it into line, that's all. If one actually lets anger arise, if it gets hot down in the solar plexus, then that's a different story. That's bad. It's upsetting, and it's not pleasant. It's *dukkha*. We tend to justify our anger and that just increases the *dukkha*.

Kilesas always loop, one thing leads to another, making the situation more and more troublesome. We have to learn how to act and react properly in situations that arise. A lot of aspects of Dhamma are in a sense good psychology. But the ways of Dhamma go rather further because they have behind them an understanding of what the purpose is, what the aim is, what we're trying to achieve. Unlike in psychology, we see that there is an end to the purpose, there is some real goal to be attained. Whereas psychology is just leading people back to a rather messy social norm.

States of mind require certain conditions to arise. If the essential conditions are lacking, then those states won't arise easily. It is true that other people

can influence our state of mind. From our own point of view, that influence comes from what we understand the other person to be. What is another person? We tend to think of a person as body, but there is something more behind that. There is an attitude, almost like a taste...it's hard to describe. That is much more representative of the real person than just the body. We often look on the body of the person as being the important thing, especially facial expressions, sound of the voice and so on. Although all these things are just externals, we understand to be the person.

The influence of a person is something more subtle. All I can say is that the presence of Ajaan Mahā Boowa is probably helping to uplift one's *citta* a bit. It's the attitude of a teacher. When you have a teacher, the teacher to start with is separate. What you must do by practice and by learning is to build up the teacher inside. When the teacher is completely inside, then you will probably never have to refer to the external teacher. This is the attitude. When you have built up the teacher inside then you are independent. That's the important thing. If you can create that teacher inside you can go anywhere. In a sense, the teacher is always inside anyway.

You can see things that come from the *citta*, but you can't see the *citta* directly. You can see only its shadow. You can see the attitudes that come from it. You can see these attitudes in other people; and it's very easy to see them in children because they act naturally. When you can see the way they behave, you can see what their behavior comes from, but you can't pin it down. You know perfectly well that there is something behind it but you can't pin it down. In fact, it's the *citta*. Our own actions come out in the same way, but again, we can't pin down where they come from. It's like I said the other day about walking meditation: "When you come to the end of the path and are about to turn, see if you can see the volition to turn as it arises". It's very hard to see. You can try to see it but... "Where is it?" It's there all right, and after sometime you begin to realize it what's happening, but it's not easy.

This is particularly true of the states we attain and the experiences we have in *samādhi*. All sorts of states can come up in *samādhi*: visions, feelings, sounds as well, but the important thing behind it all is the *citta*. That's what really matters all the time — those other things are just peripheral, like things projected onto a screen. It's the one behind the projections that matters.

That's a very difficult thing to realize — very difficult. Just as a knife cannot cut itself, so the *citta* cannot look at itself. There is no way. The *citta* is the one that does the looking, and the only thing it can look at is itself as it was in the past. You have to make a distinction in time. The *citta* at this moment can only look at previous *cittas*. You can learn from that, but you still can't see clearly what it was because you must get your information from past actions and phenomena that have already arisen. You can learn from that what the phenomena were, and you can gradually learn about the *citta* and the way it functions. It's difficult because the *citta* is so very subtle. The *citta* is the one that always causes people the greatest trouble; but it's the one that is most valuable too, the one that really matters all the time. The *citta* is the essence, the thing that really matters in a person — nothing else matters. If the *citta* is taken out of a person...dead completely dead. The *citta* is life. It is also the meaning of life. Because of that, what does not have a *citta* isn't alive — it's just material substance, that's all.

Take just one joint while you're walking and see it moving. See how this bone is just doing that. Take one thing at a time and try to define it as closely as you can...

I try to stay in the moment and feel my way into the bone...sometimes it feels like the bone has its own consciousness.

It hasn't got its own consciousness, but feeling the bone is alright. The thing is, that you have to do it in your own way because your way won't be the same as that of other people. The *citta* is like that. The *citta* has its own mode of doing things. The *citta* is not made in a factory. *Cittas* are not all the same. They're quite different from person to person. Because of that, they do things in different ways. They see things differently. If you tell a person to do a particular practice, he will pick it up in the way he understands it. Another person goes in a quite different way. Both ways are right, but each is right for that particular person. You cannot say that there is one right way for everyone. So whichever way you understand it, use that. Mostly, if something is wrong, it will show up.

The idea came from yoga, that each part of the body has its own consciousness.

As to whether cells have consciousness or not is a moot point. I don't know. I don't think it matters anyway. The body seems to be made up of little groups. First there are the cells, which form into groups of cells; these groups form into larger groups, eventually forming the organs and the different parts of the body. The whole body is constructed of cells grouping together, one on another. Because of that, the body is a very complex organism, so it's impossible to tell if one particular group is a separate entity or not. What sort of entity would it be? Has it got anything behind it? Finally we just have to take the body as a biological mechanism, and leave it at that, because we don't really quite know what it is. What you can say is what the body is in your own experience of it. From your own experience you can definitely say what the body is. I don't have to tell you because you can work that out yourself.

Generally, when starting the practice, it's best not to attempt to do anything too complex. It's like a child: when you want to teach it something, you start with simple things and gradually build up to more complex things. Similarly with meditation practice, you should begin with something simple. As you become use to that, then you can go on to more complex things. This is why in the breathing practice we begin by putting our attention at one point, and that's all. We are simply aware of the breath at that point. Later we become aware of the breath as it passes that point, and of every pass of the breath as it goes in and out. We just watch it constantly. Later we may take up the idea of impermanence, how it changes every moment. The beginning of the breath isn't the same as the next moment, or the next moment — each time it's changing. The moment that has passed has disappeared completely into the past, it's gone. It is as though it was a thousand years ago. It no longer matters. It's gone just like that. We can no longer find that part of the breath anywhere. The whole breath is moving all the time in the same way. The moment of the immediate present is moving along, leaving a path of past moments behind it. The future doesn't yet exist. You can take up that contemplation, but you shouldn't do that to begin with because it's too complex, too much.

You can also see the *dukkha*, the discontent, in breathing. You've been breathing back and forth the whole of your life like that, and you can't stop.

You can see it going on and on — movement all the time — you can see the *dukkha*, the discontent, the suffering in it. You can't just relax and make it stop. You've got to go on. You can see the three marks of existence: *anicca*, which is impermanence or change, *dukkha*, the unsatisfactoriness of things, discontent and suffering, *anattā*, none of these things are a real abiding entity, they are all just phenomena. Buddha said that those three characteristics are the marks of everything. All things have these three characteristics. It will depend on a person's character which one they pick to investigate, which one they like most, which one that suits them most. Different people tend toward a different one of those three. In fact, any one of the three will bring up the other two as well.

What about you? Which one of those three do you practice most?

Anattā. It seems obvious to me. But choosing one doesn't mean we shouldn't consider the others too. The others are quite important also. But *anattā* is the one that has more meaning to me.

You can see that wherever you look everything is made up of bits, bits and pieces put together. Everything right down to molecules and atoms, they're still bits and pieces. They've got all sorts of strange names for the original bits and pieces, but I don't think they're original either. In the end, they are still just bits and pieces.

I remember in school when the teacher told me that the smallest particle was the electron in the atom I asked what was that made up of.

You could say energy. It seems these things are not real particles, they're just waves. Sometimes waves, sometimes particles — they just behave in different ways and no one really understands them. In truth, we can only understand things which are within the limits of our basic understanding. We have a complex symbolic way of understanding things which we must use. When we encounter something that doesn't follow the same pattern, we just don't understand it. We might be able to express in mathematics, but then people don't really understand what the mathematics means, either.

It's worth considering the limits of the mind — the mind is limited. People tend to think that we can know anything and everything. But we can't,

simply because we are limited by our own minds. Take our senses, for example. We have the five external senses and the mind inside. Whatever we think of in terms of sensory phenomenon, that's the whole world, the whole universe; it all comes in through the five senses. From that we use the mind to try to understand how things work in the world. Then maybe we find things in the world that don't work quite the way we understand them. We just don't know to understand them. We can only understand things as our minds understand them, and that's the limit. In fact, the mind is really quite limited.

Perhaps those like the *Arahants* who have a thorough experience of the *citta* can get other forms of knowledge, other forms of knowing, that I can't say. But for the ordinary person, that's us, we have a very limited capacity to know things, to understand things.

When we know and understand things our knowledge and understanding always arises in a particular symbolic form in the mind. We look at something and we say it's square. Well "square" is a sort of symbolic shape in our minds. We fit things that we see into that shape, even though squareness is only a concept that does not really exist outside of the vision we have of it in our minds. We always fit things into a pattern. Symbols are worth thinking about; if you like thinking, think about symbols. Symbols are very important. Everywhere we have symbols. To start with, all of our words are symbols. Our written language is all symbols. That's just the beginning.

It reminds me of a symposium in England I attended where they had invited different religious teachers, each teaching different forms of religions. A Chinese person teaching Confucianism stood up and asked: "Does anyone want some confusion?" He knew what he was talking about!

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The Power of Sexual Craving

We were talking about the danger of *rāga-taṅhā*, which is sexual craving. This is something we should know about because it's a very powerful thing and big enemy to us all. It's one of the most powerful of the *kilesas*. Both greed and hate can arise from *rāga-taṅhā*. It can drive them up. It's the factor that brings us back to life time after time. It's the instigator of rebirth. It can come out in all sorts of forms: in aggression, in greed, in hate, it can even come out in delusion, making a person dull and lazy. All sorts of ways it can come out. In fact, you can say the majority of the trouble in the world is due to *rāga-taṅhā*. It's a most dangerous defilement. It's something we should watch out for and question ourselves about, something we should think about and investigate. Being the main cause of endless *dukkha*, it is very important.

Ajaan Mahā Boowa speaks a lot about *rāga-taṅhā*. He warns people about it. It's the prime instigator of rebirth. The person who attains *Anāgāmi* has destroyed *rāga-taṅhā* and because of that is no longer reborn. Once that is gone there are no more rebirths to this world. Rebirth in physical form cannot take place because there is nothing left to cause it. The thing that would bring us back is gone. So we should look into ourselves to search it out and investigate so as to get to know it thoroughly. *Rāga-taṅhā* is the worst of the *kilesas*. It comes under the general heading of greed, but because it's so powerful and so important it's given almost a separate existence in *kammaṭṭhāna* circles. In fact, it can come up as greed or as hate. It can come up as delusion too. It can bring up any of these. *Rāga-taṅhā* can come out in many different ways. It comes out not only in the obvious ways of sexual behavior but also in unmindful actions, in personal display, in trying to show how clever one is. Because of that, conceit can come from it as well. It's a very important factor, and a very dangerous one too.

You've probably read about this Japanese sect that has caused a lot of trouble by putting poison gas in the Tokyo subways. It looks as though the background of that is *rāga-taṅhā*, probably unrecognized, but that is what's behind it. It shows the sort of trouble it can cause. Even though we can't do much about it in the world, we can do quite a lot about it in ourselves. We must be very much aware of it and be on guard. Try to overcome it. The

antidotes that will overcome it are contemplation of the body, the *asuba* practices and contemplation of dead and decaying bodies. They all go right against *rāga-tañhā* and so can overcome it quite effectively.

There is a story of a *bhikkhu* who fell in love with some beautiful young girl at the time of the Buddha. The girl died and the Buddha had the *bhikkhu* come along to see the funeral at the cremation ground. In those days they didn't burn the corpses, they just threw them out on the ground. The Buddha then said to him: "Now this woman here...you can have her as much as you like." It enabled him, the *bhikkhu*, to break through and see his own *rāga-tañhā*. This was the Buddha's very clever method of helping the *bhikkhu* to overcome his problem.

If you have trouble with *rāga-tañhā*, sometimes it's worthwhile to think up some horrific image of a dead body. When you feel *rāga-tañhā* arising you bring that up. You'll find that everything just cools off. It's a very effective antidote. If you've prepared a dead body through your own contemplations, then you can use that. If you've seen a dead body, then you can bring that image up and contemplate it. That can help. This factor, *rāga-tañhā*, is so dangerous that you need some method to get it under control. If you prepare yourself with a horrific image of a dead body, that can help very much. When *rāga-tañhā* comes up, bring the image up and you'll find everything cools off. It's like pouring water on a fire.

Rāga-tañhā can come up in many different forms. It can come up as aggression or as ambition — the kind of thing you get in an office where someone is trying to advance by treading other people down. That's the type of attitude you get with *rāga-tañhā*. It's the *rāga-tañhā* in us that's saying: "I am the best, I am the one!" It's pushing us up all the time, making us feel big and important. If we learn to see it, we can realize what sorts of things come from it, and how extensive they are.

What was the raga-tañhā in the Japanese sect you mentioned earlier?

That sect was going to take over the country because they didn't like the way things were going. In other words, they were saying: we are the best, we are the ones who know, we want power. The wanting of power is so often *rāga-tañhā*, nothing else but that. The idea behind power is often an attempt to

find security for self. But that's the wrong way to find it, it doesn't really lead to security at all. It doesn't work that way; but this is the way the *kilesas* think of it.

Rāga-taṅhā can come out in all sorts of ways. You can see it in the behavior of these chickens. What makes the cocks fight each other, it's just that.

How can you escape from this condition as soon as possible?

By practicing *asubha*. *Asubha kammaṭṭhāna*.

The two different sexes are only forms that come from the same thing?

Concerning the forms of the *citta*, there are variations depending on circumstances. The *citta* can take on all sorts of forms depending on the circumstances.

I mean a man and a woman have the same citta; it's only different in form.

It wouldn't be identical, but it is the same underlying factor there all the time. The way it comes out in the *citta* will depend on the conditions of the present. The *citta* comes up and it has concomitances. Those concomitances are the concomitant factors that make up the *citta* at that moment, so they will define the type of *citta* that arises. Because of that, it depends on the individual which factors arise at any time. Depending on those factors a certain type of *citta* will arise.

Rāga-taṅhā has enormous variations, but the basic factor is still there with the *kilesas* behind it. It can come up associated with hate or greed or delusion quite easily. What arises will depend on the factors that make up the *citta*. The consciousness of a woman tends to be a bit different from that of a man, so that would modify these factors. *Rāga-taṅhā* is still there in both cases because the underlying *kilesas* are the same.

Fundamentally, the desire that's behind *rāga-taṅhā* is the wanting of life in bodily form. This is why when *rāga-taṅhā* disappears the person has got to the stage of *Anāgāmī*. The *Anāgāmī* doesn't come back to this mess. Getting rid of *rāga-taṅhā* means that one gets up to that state. But it's not easy,

because that's just one stage below *Arahant*. Ajaan Mahā Boowa says that if a person says they've really understood the body and have destroyed the *rāga-taṇhā* there are various questions that can be asked to check if the person really has.

People want to experience feeling in order to confirm self. People want to feel themselves, to feel “I am”. But they don't really have anything to show “I am”— there is nothing they can point to, nothing they can grab hold of. So people crave to have a distinct feeling. The idea of self causes people a lot of trouble because when they cling to this idea they constantly want feeling as something to support this idea. It's hard work supporting it all the time. It's *dukkha*.

If they could just drop the idea of self, they would be all right. I am not saying you can drop it just like that — you can't. People can't just drop self. If they dropped self in one way, they'd just take it up in another way. The only thing you can do is work on it — work on the practice. Develop *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā* until the *citta* develops. When the *citta* develops to a sufficient level, the dropping of those things will happen automatically. There will be no need to do anything. When the idea of self is clearly understood, the desire to grasp hold of those things is dropped. It's not necessary to do anything. It's not like giving up cigarettes but still constantly craving one. Really speaking, a person who has given up cigarettes like that hasn't given them up properly. As long as the wanting remains, they haven't really been given up. If a person persists, eventually that craving will die away. On the other hand, the giving up of *kilesas* is something that happens quite quickly. It happens that, say, you haven't thought about it and suddenly one day you think: “Oh, the *kilesas* don't come up now like before. I am not interested in them anymore.” The interest has dropped away. This is the way the breaking of attachment should be — it should be automatic.

Many people teach you should just break all attachments — but you can't. The *kilesas* are quite subtle and clever. Some people won't use the word “I”, as though that accomplishes anything. They substitute with all sorts of things. They talk about “this one here”, or something like that. That's just substituting another word for the word “I”. It means the same thing. You don't get rid of attachment to self by giving up a word.

It has to be cut by the practice, samādhi and paññā.

Yes, the connection between *samādhi* and *paññā* is put very nicely in the *Visuddhimagga*. *Samādhi* is like a man who is blind and *paññā* is like a man without legs. If the blind man takes the man without legs on his back, then the man with eyes can point the way while the man with legs walks the path. It's quite a good simile. If you have both *samādhi* and *paññā* you can both see and walk in the right direction.

Samādhi is blind. We use a *parikamma* to get into *samādhi*, but we don't really know where we are. When going down into *samādhi* we don't know what to do — it's just a state that comes up. We enter into that state and then we come out of it. It's pleasant and it helps to refresh and strengthen the mind. Because of that, it's valuable.

Wisdom, on the other hand, can learn and know exactly what's happening, where we are going, and how far we've reached. Wisdom knows all these things. It can see. But we become exhausted when we continue contemplating for a long time, so we don't have the strength to go on. Practicing *samādhi* then is very strengthening, very refreshing.

I've been dealing with doubt. It just doesn't go away.

There are two types of doubt. It's very important to understand them. The doubt which arises due to the *kilesas* is called *vicikicchā*. *Vicikicchā* is when we still have doubts even though we have thought about and understood something quite clearly. For instance, we have seen all the steps for developing *samādhi* and *paññā* which lead to getting rid of the *kilesas*. Having seen it all clearly, there is still a doubt in the back of the mind saying: "Is it really all true?" That is *vicikicchā*, which is the *kilesas*. The other type of doubt is not the *kilesas* at all; in fact, it's a very valuable factor. It arises when we have some experience which causes us to wonder: "What is this experience?" We know the experience but we don't know what it means. We don't know whether to call it *samādhi* or *jhāna* or *Sotāpanna* or whatever. We just don't know. Here we should have doubt. It's a very valuable factor. A person who has doubts in such things as that will never be deceived in the idea: "I am an Arahant". This doubt must be fostered. We must have doubt in such things. The Buddha said there are things that are open to doubt, and

that we should be doubtful about them. This type of doubt is really a factor of wisdom, so it's quite valuable.

The type of doubt where we can't believe even though we have worked it all out for ourselves — that's just *kilesas*. The doubt that comes from wisdom is very valuable; the type that comes from *kilesas* just blocks the path. If the wrong type of doubt comes up you should avoid thinking about it. When anything like that comes up, just focus back to the breathing. That's what you should return to every time.

When mental dullness arises, that must be the *kilesas* coming up to block something, to divert your attention and prevent it from getting through to something. I think you should try to contemplate that dullness — not while you're in that state, but afterwards. What are they blocking off? What are they trying to stop? This you must look and see for yourself. When the *kilesas* come up, there is a reason. The *kilesas* also bring up mental confusion. They bring this thought up, then they bring something else up, and everything becomes confused, nothing is certain. Watch out for thinking because this is the tool that the *kilesas* use. Thinking very easily drives the mind to distraction if it goes wrong.

What about thoughts that you can't see? Sometimes I feel there is a feeling constantly there and I try to get down to the thought but I can't see it.

If there is a persistent feeling there, examine it. Examine that feeling. Look at it and define it. Where is the feeling? Locate it. Analyze it as much as you can. See the nature of it. If you define something as feeling, then it is probably something that comes up through the senses. Through which sense do you define it? Is it physical, is it feeling, is it sound...what is it? It must be one of the senses arising. First of all, define it in that way. Then define its location. Where is it in the body? What's its extent? What area of the body does it cover? How does it change? What is its quality? Try and define it, get to know it.

Take feelings of hatred. What happens is that hatred arises depending on circumstances. Mostly, we experience feeling to begin with, and it's that feeling that brings up the hatred. We don't like that feeling. That feeling is *dukkha*, so a desire to suppress that feeling arises. The tendency then is to

search for scapegoats. You try to find something, like another person or a sound or the heat or whatever. You straightaway blame something like that for the unpleasant feeling. Then the anger goes out on to that. This reaction is quite wrong because that anger generates a lot of thought, and that thought is *kamma*. That *kamma* will revert back to you later and produce the feeling again. Feeling is a result of the past; but when we think, that thinking is *kamma*. So it's the thoughts that keep the anger going. It's there in the *paṭiccasamupāda*. Dependent on *passa* — the contact of sensation — feeling arises. Dependent on the arising of feeling, *tañhā* arises. Then the craving comes. So the craving comes dependent on feeling. But the feeling is a result of the past, so it's just something you have to put up with. Whereas thought is *tañhā*, the craving to get rid of that unpleasant feeling, which is the making of new *kamma*.

One needs to look at feeling in terms of cause and effect. Feeling is an effect. It's not a cause. Feeling is a result of what's happened in the past. Having acted in certain ways in the past, we have set up bodily and mental conditions which give rise to feeling. When that feeling arises and we don't like it because it's unpleasant, we search for some way to overcome it. That search to overcome it is where *tañhā* comes in. When *tañhā* arises, that is *kamma*. If you find this happening and you feel it's going wrong in some way, get up and do a bit of walking. Change postures.

Sometimes I think this feeling is going to be there forever, no matter how long I practice.

No. Realize that everything is *anicca*. All is impermanent. Whatever happens, it will change. Also realize that the present moment is all we have. There is just this and nothing else. The past moment is gone, it's not there anymore. The future moment has not come, it isn't here yet. There is only this moment. Try to keep your mind at that level. Realize there is just this moment now. Internally, that moment can be fixed — like a permanent thing. Realize that the one who knows inside is fixed, not moving; but around that inner knowing nature everything is whirling. Right at this moment there is reality. I know it. I experience it. There is no question about it. What's happened in the past is not real, because that experience is gone. It's nowhere; I can't find it. All I can find is a memory. But when I remember it, that memory comes up in the present. Memory is not in the past. When I

think about the future, the prediction of the future exists in the present. It isn't the future. Because of that, the reality is here and now at this moment. Try and stick with that reality. Whatever it is, and unpleasant feeling or whatever, only that is real.

If you can keep your attention in the present moment, the past goes and the future goes and there is just now. All thoughts disappear as well.

The way of Buddhist practice is not easy. The *kilesas* come up and try to stop us all the time. There is something distorted within us. It always twists things in the wrong way. That's the nature of *avijjā*. It twists everything it around so it is all wrong. So we receive feedback from all the wrong angles. Because of that, we don't understand things. Overcoming that isn't easy.

When you experience problems coming up and can't see the way to solve them, try to stop and think: "Here I am. What is here? A body. Senses. I can hear things. I've got memory, thought and consciousness — I know". Just look and realize that these things are here right now at this moment. All the phenomena that arise and cease, they're all happening right now. Don't try to look too much at what the books say. See it for yourself. Look in yourself. 'What's here? What is this?' You should really feel free to think for yourself. It's true that the books are valuable and give us a good basis to work on, but you must find the Dhamma for yourself and you must see it in your own way. If you sticks too closely to the books, you probably won't understand the problem. It is best to try to work things out for yourself, and then check it against the books. Where possible, its good to find out for yourself. When you find the answer for yourself, then you see things clearly and know just how they work. If you then check your understanding against the books and find you're not wrong, you gain confidence. The whole of the *Buddha-sāsanā* is a method, but the books can't tell you everything. Books are sort of like a bare skeleton that you have to put the meat on. The meat comes from your own contemplations, from your own understanding. When you understand correctly, that understanding will be supported by what's in the books. If it's not supported by the texts, then it has to be carefully questioned. Question for yourself where it is wrong. Perhaps you just have not read the text rightly.

The writings of the Thai Ajaans are very good. The Ajaans have the advantage that they speak in their own language. Not only the language

itself, but in the modern idiom as well. Because of that, it's often easier to understand what they say than it is the original texts. But you must also be cautious which Ajaans you read. Some are better than others. You can't go by what society thinks of Ajaans either. Social views and the ways of Dhamma are not the same thing at all. Some Ajaans are well-known and considered by society to be very high, but in fact there is not very much there. Other Ajaans are practically unknown, but they know a great deal. There are those that are well-known and also know a great deal, so one has to be cautious.

There are the old questions: How do you tell who is a good Ajaan? How do you tell who is an *Arahant*? Well, some people just have the eye...they can see it from their own experience. They know it themselves so they're able to say. Other people think they know, but they don't. Probably the best way to find out is to check with the other Ajaans to see what they think. They are more likely to be in the position to know than the average lay person. But even that's uncertain, because it depends on which Ajaans you check with. It is difficult. Whether the person is actually *Arahant* isn't what actually matters. What matters is how genuine the Ajaan is, how genuine his teaching is. That can affect you directly, and that is important.

Take the statement: "I am Arahant". By itself, the statement is untrue because the "I" and the "Arahant" don't fit together. You can't put that sort of thing into language anyway so it doesn't mean anything. It's rather one *bhikkhu* like in the *suttas* who gave other *bhikkhus* a superb talk on Dhamma. They said: "Oh! Ajaan must be an Arahant." He said: "No, I am not an Arahant. It's as if there is a well and I can see water at the bottom of the well, but I don't have anything to get it out with." So, though he wasn't an Arahant, he could see it all. He knew it all. He didn't have the ability, which suggests he had wisdom but not *samādhi*. Later on, apparently he did become Arahant. Because of that, it's very difficult to assess who is an Arahant and who isn't. Certainly the ordinary person is in no position to judge between Arahant and Anāgāmi, or any of the other paths. Certainly Arahant and Anāgāmi are very difficult to tell. Ajaan Mahā Boowa says that if he's unable to talk with someone and question him, he's not sure. Until he's been able to talk with him about his practice right through from beginning to end, he still can't be sure. He said he was quite sure about Ajaan Khao because he talked with him. He was also quite sure about Ajaan Waen. But he never had a

chance to talk to Ajaan Fun. He said he thought he was an Arahant but he couldn't be a hundred percent sure.

When we do actions, that's *kamma*. *Kamma* is a very relative thing — relative to what we are. It is also relative to our own Dhamma — our natural state, in other words. When we're in this state, if we do certain things, those actions will lead us to go lower than this state; if we do others, they will lead us to go higher. Higher and lower here are just relative to our natural state. There is nothing absolute about them. There is nothing absolute about killing, for instance, but for a human being, killing leads him to a lower state. The *kamma* that comes back to him from that act will probably be that he will be killed in the future. But, if in the mean time he comes across Dhamma, practices Dhamma and attains enlightenment, that attainment makes it all void. It is almost as though the killing and being killed are like a dream. I think it's a bit like that. For the ordinary person, the act of killing means experiencing a lot of *dukkha*, no doubt about it. A person who has done a lot of bad *kamma*, but has the right type of mind for Dhamma, has a very good incentive to try to get free. Unfortunately, very few have the right type of mind. Doing *kamma* alters the character of most people. When a person does bad *kamma*, it alters their character for the worse. They may think: "When the time comes, I'll do some good deeds". The problem is, they're slipping down all the time, so when that time comes they forget about doing good deeds. They don't do them — that's the way it tends to go. If you go down one foot, climbing back is hard work. It's easy to go down but hard to get up. That's why it is best to avoid even small instances of bad *kamma*, because they become habits that get into one's character. When they are in one's character, they alter one's character.

It is very instructive to meet a person who is *ducarita*, who actually kills animals — someone like a butcher, for instance. Look at his character. I knew a man like that. When he was young he was quite good looking. When he got older he started drinking a lot and became very coarse. He changed entirely. There is a case on record in the *suttas* of a man who had been a pig butcher. When he reached the age of sixty, he stopped speaking and wouldn't take his food normally. He had to eat kneeling on the ground. He wouldn't use his hands, he just stretch his neck up and eat it like that. I heard there was a similar case in northern India much more recently: a man who had been a pig butcher did the same thing within the last 40 years. By

killing a type of animal, a person incurs a debt, which means they take on the characteristics of that animal. So by killing animals, one tends to take on some of their characteristics.

If you want to kill an elephant you have to plan. Planning is also *kamma*. That's not to say that planning is the same as killing, but it's associated with it. The actual taking of life is the killing itself. Because it's been planned, so a lot of *kamma* is associated with it that we can hardly call it *kusala*. Killing an elephant and killing an ant is not the same thing because the elephant is much bigger.

What about the people who buy meat from the butcher, what about their kamma?

If a person decides to kill, he has malicious intention in his heart. He is driven to kill by what's in his heart. When a person buys a piece of meat in the market, the attitude he has in his heart is entirely different. That's the important thing. There is no intention to kill anything. For a *bhikkhu*, it's an offense to eat meat if we know, think or even suspect it was killed specifically for us. If we don't know, there is no offence at all.

If your country is at war with another country and you get a job as a bus driver, in the place of a man went to the army, are you indirectly killing people? You can't go very far with that kind of reasoning. You then find a whole chain going back from that that links to an enormous number of things.

What the Buddha taught is what's internal. What's internal means what is in the heart. We must look at our own volitions to see what they are. Because people in the West are always looking at it externally, they make the eating of meat into a big issue without considering the fundamental difference between killing and eating. They are looking outward at the way things are in the world instead of looking inward to see how things are in the heart, and so understand their purposes. When they look out in the world, they find all sorts of problems coming up, all sorts of difficulties, and they don't know how to sort things out. The whole teaching of the Buddha points us to look inside and see what's right for the heart.

This brings in the *satipaṭṭhāna*, the foundations of mindfulness. We must be mindful to watch whatever we think, do or say. Otherwise, it is harmful to the *citta* all the time. If you can do that you'll really be mindful. The important thing is to guard the *citta*, to watch it, to see what it's getting involved in. So often, particularly with thought, the mind jumps away for quite a long time before we can grab hold of it again and bring it back.

Sometimes my mind seems so unfocused and I have no motivation, just dragging along.

This happens when you can't see the results of doing the practice. Often it seems there aren't any results. But if you persist, the time comes when you do break through. The *kilesas* are being attacked all the time, so they're counter-attacking. They're producing that problem, that trouble. But they can't keep that resistance up forever. The time will come when they give way. The advantage of making a breakthrough is that it shows you what the other side of the fence is like. You realize that there is something worthwhile there. This can help to give you confidence in the practice.

It's very important to get some initial experience in the practice — to get the first good results. When you get good results you can see the value of it, so you know that it is good, that it is the right way. Then you realize that in order to reach that consistently, you have to do more practice. Eventually you may feel that there isn't much else you want to do besides practice. Life out in the world is all play; there is nothing of real value out there. If you go out into the world and play about, what's the end result? Everything you gain in the world is gone when you die. You can't keep any of it.

The only thing you keep is your *kamma*, and the best way to make good *kamma* is to do the practice. This is right *kamma*. Because it's direct training to gain Nibbāna, the *kamma* of doing the practice is probably the best kind you can make. The attaining of Nibbāna is where *kamma* ceases. It can no longer be called “good *kamma*” or “bad *kamma*” — it's gone beyond *kamma*. It's only at that point that *kamma* is finished. Technically, when the *Arahant* acts, it's not *kamma*, it's *akiriya* — just mere action. There are no aftereffects to it. There is no *kamma* behind it at all, so there will be no results in the future.

Is that because they have no thoughts?

When one attains enlightenment, the faculties — the body and the *khandhas* — are still there. Just the *kilesas* are gone. Because the *kilesas* are gone, there is no reference to self. But all the constants of the world are still there. Ajaan Mahā Boowa always says that a person who attains enlightenment has only those same basic faculties that were there before he attained enlightenment. So he is able to teach others only with whatever capacity he had before. If his previous capacities were good, he will be able to use those effectively to teach. But he can't suddenly develop teaching abilities that he didn't have before. Basically, what is known to the enlightened person is just what he is, his state of being.

I was thinking the other day that the citta needs the body to work.

Yes it does. The body gives us not only the anchor, but it also gives us the faculties of the mind. The faculties of feeling, memory, thought and consciousness. These are valuable tools. In the human state there is more *dukkha*; because there is *dukkha*, there is more reason to try to free oneself from it. If we were in the *deva* state, we might think that was good enough. We might get stuck in that state. The trouble with getting stuck in those states is that they aren't permanent — though they last a long time, sooner or later one dies. When one dies, then where will one go to? It depends on one's *kamma*. Quite likely the *kamma* will take one lower; the person who has reached the *deva* state usually does not go higher than that — very few go upward when they pass away from the *deva* state. If they had made the kind of *kamma* which would lead them to a higher state, then they would probably have experienced the results of that *kamma* already. The tendency is to come back to the human world again, which will probably bring a lot more *dukkha*. Having had the experience of the *deva* state, coming back to this world probably doesn't feel too good!

The body is necessary, so you should look after it to the extent that we need it. Seeing changes in the body can help the *citta* to see that this body is not oneself. In a sense, it frees the *citta* from the body. Whenever we get rid of some of the *kilesas*, we feel an increase of freedom. The *kilesas* are binding us down. The main aim of the body contemplation is to get rid of the *kilesas*. Look at other things, too. Try to question everything. When you question

everything, sooner or later you'll come back to the *citta*, because that's the center. You should question any sensation arising through the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, mind, feeling, memory, thought, consciousness or anything else. Is there anything you don't need the mind for? You need the mind for everything. In essence, it's always got to be a thing of mind. Because of that, mind is the true essential here. Everything you work on in your wisdom practice will eventually come back to that.

The investigation always leads back inside. Basically, all the senses work in the same way. The only slight difference is with feeling — it knows *sukha* and *dukkha*. All the other senses are neutral. The *sukha* and *dukkha* that arise from the other senses is actually feeling — and that is a separate thing.

Really speaking, we experience the results of *kamma*. The new *kamma* is intention, volition. That varies greatly between bad people and good people, who are bad or good depending on their actions — in other words, the *kamma* they make. This is something that is to some extent under a person's control. It's quite heavily biased in one direction, but it is still under a person's control. The person always has the opportunity to decide either to do or not to do. Mostly, though, they have such strong habits that they don't even think, they just do it.

The advantage of developing mindfulness is that it helps to cut away unnecessary thoughts, or thoughts that are completely out of control. Mindfulness brings some control over them. The point is not to get rid of all thought. That would be quite wrong. If your thoughts are good, pertaining to Dhamma, there is no reason why you shouldn't let them continue. You must have the mindfulness to keep a watch over them to make sure they stay on Dhamma and don't slip away to other things. This is the advantage of having mindfulness. This is why we have to train ourselves. We train repeating *Buddho* in order to stop the thoughts and get the mind properly integrated, so that it's not scattered all over the place. That integration makes the mind strong. When it's strong it can penetrate and see things. The whole practice prepares the ground to develop wisdom. When the ground has been sufficiently prepared and the mindfulness is strong enough, — when it has become enough of a habit, preferably to the level of automatic mindfulness — the thoughts don't stray from what they should be on, they automatically stay on whatever we focus them on. That's called *mahāsati* and *mahāpaññā*.

Then the mind becomes very, very strong at getting rid of the *kilesas*. That is the aim of the practice. This isn't to say that you must develop *sati* and *paññā* to perfection before you use them. Like most things in life, you can try them out long before that. You develop a bit of wisdom, and then the mind wanders off somewhere. You try to realize it and bring it back again. If you can't keep it on some contemplation of wisdom, that means the mind is not sufficiently under control, so you need to develop more *samādhi* and mindfulness. Once the *samādhi* and mindfulness is sufficient to keep the mind focused on an investigation, like body contemplation, then that is enough, that is all you need. The purpose of mindfulness is to give you the ability to do the necessary investigations.

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Paṭiccasamu¹pada

When doing meditation practice, you should always appreciate the value of the external teaching. The teaching, as it pertains to activities outside of formal meditation, is a very important aspect of the overall practice. The way in which you perform simple everyday tasks, and the attitude with which you perform them, constantly reinforces your mindful focus. Unlike meditation, where we do not always clearly understand what we are focusing on, the tasks of everyday life are straightforward and easy to understand. We should do even the most mundane tasks with reason, thinking about them in terms of cause and effect. This helps us to develop wisdom in everything we do. We become circumspect and see a comprehensive view of our actions. We see not only the results we will get in one direction, but we can anticipate the effects that will take place in other directions. In other words, we see the all-around implications of our actions.

You can see from the books of the Vinaya that the Buddha was very concerned about details. So, small details do matter. Whatever you do, no matter how small, you should try to do it as perfectly as you can. And you should do it with a full commitment, as well. If you do not do actions with a full commitment, you should question whether it is worth doing those actions at all. That is the right attitude of a serious meditator. In that way, you learn to put your full effort into whatever you do. Then, when you turn to meditation, that right attitude will automatically arise, allowing you to easily put your full attention on it. Mostly, when you put your full attention on something, that thing becomes interesting.

You should understand what is meant by being mindful. When you keep your attention fixed on what you are doing, that is a necessary training for developing mindfulness. For instance, when you keep your attention on the movement of your feet when you are walking, that is a training in mindfulness. But that is not the real mindfulness; the real mindfulness appears in the heart. Whatever you are doing must come in through the senses, and go inside to the heart, the one who knows it. If you try to watch it at the periphery, the mind is always jumping about, turning first to one thing and then do another. If that is the case, you can only be partly aware, because it is too much work jumping from one thing to another. But if you

remain with the awareness inside the heart, whatever comes in through the doors of the senses, you know it. By letting the objects of the senses come to you, you will see them clearly and not miss anything. So the real mindfulness is inside the heart.

There is a training which can sometimes bring you to that condition of internal mindfulness. When you are feeling quite calm, listen to the various sounds around you. Then open your eyes and look at the things around you. When you have done that for a moment, close your eyes again, and listen. Then try to do both seeing and listening at the same time. When you try to do both at the same time, you will find that your attention is jumping back and forth. The only way you can succeed in listening and seeing at the same time is to do it from inside. By using this method, you can sometimes succeed in forcing your attention to remain inside. When the mind has to focus its awareness outside, that outward attention causes it to do a lot of work, which can be very tiring. When the focus of awareness remains inside, the mind simply stays in one place and lets everything come to it. That fixed, inner focus is the real goal of mindfulness. The rest of the practice is just training for mindfulness.

Are the kilesas always present, even in our calmest and happiest moments?

Yes, *kilesas* are always present in the mind. For the most part, we experience a mixture of *kilesas* and Dhamma. The only time when you might get free from the *kilesas* temporarily is in the deepest *samadhi*; or in deep, dreamless sleep. The whole of your mind is programmed by your past. So when we think of anything, or review anything, we always know it in terms of what we have learned from the past. Then because our entire past has been influenced by the *kilesas*, the whole of our outlook is tainted by the *kilesas*. Because we cannot get free from that, we have no other option. It is comparable to a fish living in water: although the fish may take the water for granted, everything he does is conditioned by water. The water is its only option.

All of the *kilesas* are somehow bound up with the idea of self. The self is a reference point, and that reference point is created by the *kilesas*. Bad states of mind obviously involve the *kilesas*; but good states of mind are also involved with *kilesas*. But like fish in water, we are so immersed in the *kilesas* that we can never get free from them. Just as the fish knows only the

experience of water, we have no idea what life without the *kilesas* is like. Because they are always there, we know only their side of the story.

Some people believe that peaceful states of mind are a foretaste of Nibbāna. That is not true. Nibbāna is a total break from every type of conventional experience. It is a revelation of something which has always been there, but we have never seen it. When the citta reaches the stage where it is not *anicca*, not *dukkha* and not *anattā*, it has completely transcended the conventional world of our experience. It has gone completely beyond. Because of that, Nibbāna can never be explained in conventional language. In the *Sutta Nipāta*, Venerable Moggharāja addresses the Buddha and asks him to explain the state in which all conditions cease. The Buddha replied that where all conditions cease, all ways of speech also cease. Nibbāna is the Unconditioned, so you cannot use conditioned ways of speech to speak about it.

Paṭiccasamuppada is a realization that the Buddha came to on the night he gained enlightenment, which means that it is very high Dhamma, and very difficult to clearly comprehend. For that reason, the conditional factors of *Paṭiccasamuppada* should be used in your meditation with great caution. There is a tendency in Buddhist books to analyze and expand on the meaning of *Paṭiccasamuppada* at great length. The *Paṭiccasamuppada* must be seen inside one's heart; that is the only place where it arises. The factors of *Paṭiccasamuppada* are very difficult to interpret using conventional language. *Avijjā paccaya sankhāra*: that *avijjā* is the fundamental ignorance within oneself, which is something very deep, and extremely difficult to understand. The *sankhāras* that *avijjā* conditions, give rise to *viññāṇa*. Those three — *avijjā*, *sankhāra* and *viññāṇa* — are not based on the physical human body. They are most certainly mental states. *Viññāṇa* is a condition for *nāma-rūpa* to arise. *Nāma-rūpa* is a most difficult factor to interpret. *Nāma* literally means name; in other words, putting names to things, designating and defining. And *rūpa* is the form; that is, the thing that we make concrete with the name. When you make forms concrete with names, you divide them out from the whole. When we look at the forest, we see leaves, trees, and flowers. We call them leaves, trees, and flowers merely to define certain aspects of what we see. But they are only *our* aspects, they do not exist as such there in the forest. The forest itself is one whole; it is we who differentiate the various aspects. In reality, they do not exist as separate entities at all. But we separate the forest into various parts so that we can

bring some order to our perceptions. This is how *nāma-rūpa* works. It is the dividing out of certain aspects of our perceptions of nature which accord with the previous *sankhāras*. In other words, we are defining our world according to our own past tendencies. So we create a world in the present based on data from the past. *Nāma-rūpa* then conditions *saḷāyatana*, which is the breaking forth of the fields of the senses. The senses are the fields of seeing, hearing, smiling, tasting and touching. But it is not that the senses are faculties that we gain, but much more that they are productive things. The fields of sense produce seeing, hearing, smiling, tasting and touching, which means they are very actively involved in those faculties.

The point is, when you probe deeply into *Paṭiccasamuppada*, you find no solid ground to stand on. There is an element of uncertainty in all of the conditions, because all of them are completely interrelated. So it is very difficult to figure out how these conditions work within yourself. In the end, you begin to realize that the nature of this world is no more substantial than a cloud in the sky. It is completely empty.

In the Abhidhamma approach to *Paṭiccasamuppada*, the sequence is divided into three time periods: past, present and future. But what is time? It is a concept based on this world. If we are talking about the physical body, the idea of time may be relevant. But time has no relevance where the *citta* is concerned. The human body may have a definite lifespan, but the *citta* does not have any reference to a past, present or future lifetime. The *citta* is the undifferentiated essence. As such, it is the one that really matters.

The *viññāṇa* in the *Paṭiccasamuppada* is comparable to *paṭisandhi viññāṇa*. This is not the normal *viññāṇa* of the *khandhas*. Rather it is the re-linking consciousness that connects one birth to the next. That re-linking consciousness forms the connection between past and future. *Paṭisandhi viññāṇa* takes place at the level of *bhavanga*, which is the subliminal stream of consciousness. In other words, it takes place at a very deep level.

So the average meditator should treat the *Paṭiccasamuppada* with a great deal of caution. There is no harm in thinking about it, but you must keep in the back of your mind that it is a most difficult thing to fully comprehend. It requires extraordinary insight and wisdom. There is an enormous gap between the theory and the actual practice of *Paṭiccasamuppada*.

If *Paṭiccasamuppada* is to be understood, it must be seen from the perspective of *bhāvanāmayā-paññā*, wisdom born of profound insights in meditation. In order to reach that level of meditation, you need very good *samādhi*.

Why is the contemplation of death suitable for people with an intellectual bent?

Because the contemplation of death is a very good antidote for intellectual conceit. After all, what does death mean? It means the loss of everything that I considered to be me, including all of my relationships, my memories, my learning, my social status and so on. All of these vanish at the moment of death. The intellectual development goes too. All that's left after death is my *kamma* and the faculties that I have developed, which will tend to arise in the future. That kind of thinking tends to cut through a lot of the intellectual hot air, and very quickly bring a person back down to solid ground. The contemplation of death cuts through so much of the conceit and the arrogance based on pride and status, because it brings everything down to the same level.

We should be very careful of the actions we do in everyday life, to make sure that we do not go out looking for trouble in the form of bad actions that will cause us suffering in the future. It is very easy for us to start up something, but we must be very careful when we start something up to make sure that it is leading in the right direction. We have to look and see first what we are involving ourselves in, what are we involving other people in, and how will that affect us in the future. Because, in the end, everything we do is creating *kamma*. The creating of *kamma* is building up something for the future, because good and bad *kamma* bring their respective results. So we should be careful not to unnecessarily build up a store of unwanted results.

The *citta* is the creator; it creates *kamma*. Every *kamma* is a new action; it is not the result of a past action. Past actions may to a certain extent have conditioned that *kamma*, but the action that has been conditioned is something new. That action has, in fact, been created by the *citta*. Once it is created, that action must drop away and go into dissolution. But it can only do that by the results of what has been created coming out. It is similar to a spinning top: if you wind it up, sooner or later it has to unwind. In the same way, any action we do must have its result. In order to make sure that the results are right, we must be very careful what actions we do.

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Unshakeable Security

When you have pain or fever or anything of that sort you go down and you define it. You see it. All the time you watch it changing, how it alters and you keep onto it the whole time. They say often that if you do that you cure it. It's a regular way the *kammaṭṭhāna bhikkhus* used to cure malaria. Ajaan Mahā Boowa says one mustn't have the idea that, "I am going to cure it", because that's wanting it to go away, and that desire comes from the *kilesas*. You should have the attitude that you want to know what feeling is, that you want to understand the feelings you experience. That's the important thing. Feeling is very important. Primarily what we know about the body is feeling. Inside we know the body from feeling and we don't know much about the body outside of feeling. Take the feeling away and you'd hardly know you've got a body. What is there other than feeling the external parts the bits on the outside, its nearly all feeling?

When you look at feeling, it's a very peculiar thing. You get this feeling that there is nothing outside in the world that you can compare it to. Feeling is not something you can find outside at all. You will find things that can arouse feeling but the feeling actually is in oneself. That's the only place you'll find feeling. It's the only one of the senses that does produce *dukkha*. All the other senses produce neutral feeling. If one gets *dukkha* from them its not actually from them directly. The feeling gives the *dukkha*. In other words, if you see something unpleasant what you see actually is just color and light, but when that gets in, you experience *dukkha* because feeling arises. When you check that against feeling, feeling says "I don't like that". The unpleasant feeling comes. Feeling is very important.

You use the word heart a lot. Where is the heart? What is the heart?

The heart means, the heart here in the middle of the chest. But it doesn't mean the physical heart. It means that location. That is the natural seat of the *citta* when it's at rest. That's about the best we can say.

It seems to most people that all of the mental side takes place in the head. That's not really right. It's rather like thinking all the functions of a television set go on in the cathode ray (picture) tube. They don't. That's

where the display is. In the head we have four of the five senses, so the tendency is to think it all goes on there. Whereas the *bhikkhus* that practice meditation and get somewhere with their practice, all of them find when you see or hear anything, any of the senses, the organ of sensation maybe in the head but the actual reception and experience of it is in the heart. But it's not recognized in that way by most people. You must come to recognize that in meditation practice. We in the West have the idea that the head the place that matters, and that the heart matters very little — it's just there to pump the blood. Because of that we make a great distinction between the head and the rest of the body. This makes us think the head is the important thing and it all goes on in the head.

The heads like a pair of hands it's useful. Certainly there is a lot of necessary mechanism up there. But the actual experience is not necessarily up in the head — some of it is up there, but not all of it by any means. Because we think everything's in the head then we tend to relate everything to the head. Whereas if one can really get to know the body, know the feelings, know the experiences then one finds that there are other place down here that are very important. The solar plexus is very important and the heart. Getting to know those places opens up a whole new territory of understanding and all sorts of things become clear. If one asks what's down there, what is the thing that experiences down there? Physiologically they're not things that are very special, but that's not what matters. What matters is the location.

I'll try to explain this. We can suppose that in the brain there is the knowledge of the whole body. It is known that there is a sensory area here. The body is laid out in certain areas in the brain. That's where all the nerves end up. We've got areas in the brain that correspond to every part of the body. Because of that you can say that the functions that take place in the body are mirrored up in the brain. In fact you can say the whole body is known there. That is where the sensation goes, and it's known there. When we talk about knowing the body what we're really talking about is the senses in the head. They project into a phantom body, so to speak. For example, if you get a feeling there...you press and you feel it there....it seems as though the feeling occurs at that place, but that place is located as something in the brain's mechanism. So really the experience is brain-based. Because it's related to a physical location in the body, it seems as though it occurs there, because we've learned to relate to that place since we were very small.

The whole body is almost like a phantom body of feeling. Because of that, the phantom body is very important. It's the one we know. The experiences we get in the body are the ones we know in the heart. When we talk about the heart, we're talking about an experience. The heart seems to be the experiencing place for the functions of the *citta*. It seems to be the main place for it, but exactly where the mechanism for that is another matter. It's probably up in the head somewhere. That doesn't matter because the one we have to deal with is our experience in the body. Experience in the body is definitely very important where the *citta* is concerned. You can't cut the body open and find the *citta* in the heart...it isn't there. It is quite complex. I don't know if I've explained it so that you understand it properly.

Should one experiment with feeling in the different areas?

The best thing is just to notice sensation rather than trying to do anything. Actually we do enough with them already. If someone gets angry, the feeling is all down in the heart — you get a fire down here. People are reacting to those sensations all the time. We react to them all the time, but we don't realize it because we've learned to always keep our minds outside in the world. Instead of learning about ourselves, we learn about the world. All the time we think that it is the world that matters. It's the way of society. It's the way people learn and because of that they know an enormous amount about the world — or think they do anyway — but they don't know much about themselves. Even the knowledge they have about the world is pretty dubious knowledge. It's like the “black box” we were talking about. Although we get the knowledge, we don't really know what the knowledge is about.

The whole of Dhamma is first of all learning to go inward all the time, going inside; whereas the world goes outward. In science they go out as far as they can with telescopes and such. I suppose their minds are out there too, so they don't know about themselves. They don't know what's going on here in the heart. Fundamentally, if we don't know what's going on here, we don't have a good basis for measuring what's going on outside either. Generally, once people start turning to Dhamma and learn about it, they begin learning about themselves. After that, what's going on outside seems quite insignificant. It's no longer very important. What's important is what is happening inside. It's the process of going inward. You can see it in the *Satipaṭṭhāna*.

There are four *Satipaṭṭhāna* for the setting up of mindfulness: body, feeling, *citta*, and *dhammā*. It's the process of going in all the time. The body is external and it's the most gross. Feeling is the feeling-body – going inward. Then there is the *citta*, the one who knows the feeling-body. Lastly there is *dhammā*, which are the basic principles behind the whole lot. It's going inward the whole time. From this, we often see that the methods used in religion to develop ourselves are going in the wrong direction. By that I mean the methods of belief in a God, belief in the efficacy of prayer and other things like that – they are not in themselves suitable methods to develop ourselves. Some of them may be suitable methods to set up good states of the *citta*, there's no doubt about that, but when we come down to what their aim is, they are not headed in the right direction.

Because they are going outward from self?

Yes. What's the average person's idea of God? As we say: he's an Englishman ten feet tall sitting on a cloud up there.

The trouble occurs when people get a rough idea without having an understanding about it. They can pick on things and then believe in a way that has got no understanding. It's the same with Christianity. If you look at Christianity in order to understand it properly, it's a hard job to figure it out. If you try to put the best face you can on it, you can make some sense of Christianity, but in my experience you have to find the meaning of it through Buddhism. Trying to find it from the Christian angle is terribly difficult, it's awful. And it is no good trying to change people's religious beliefs when they are based purely on faith. You have to let them be. If their views are essentially right, they'll come to a correct understanding on their own. They'll alter themselves if necessary. They'll see for themselves what the right way is. It's no good trying to push them. Some of the Catholic priests are very bad about that. They try to push people very hard with their attitudes. Catholics in general, however, I have found to be fairly broad-minded compared to other groups. They are often willing to listen.

The system of Christianity is in such a mess. First of all, nobody knows what it is to begin with. If you look back into the history of what is now known of it, it's very hard to find out what on earth Jesus taught. It's just unknown.

One thing that is quite obvious is that he was a Jew throughout his life. He never changed to anything else. Because of that, what he taught was a really form of Judaism. He may have put it into a slightly different light, but it was still Judaism, the whole of it. What's known now is that his disciples were mostly experts in guerrilla warfare. They were "sikarri". They were called sikarri because of the knives they carried. They used those knives to kill the Roman soldiers. They were very much against the Romans. That came back on them in that later the Roman army came and drove them out.

Because it was such a turbulent time, no original records have survived at all. So it is very uncertain what Jesus actually taught. Probably the earliest record was the gospel of Saint John, but even that is not any closer than fifty years. The other gospels are a hundred years removed from the events, and they tell conflicting stories. They were written in areas occupied by Rome at the time, so they couldn't say nasty things about the Romans.

An interesting thing is that the idea that Jesus is God didn't come about until three hundred years after his death. It came about when they held a convocation of bishops in Italy at the time of the emperor Constantine. The bishops voted whether Jesus was divine or not. Apparently they all voted that he was, except for two abstentions. The pope didn't want to vote, but the story goes they pulled him along by the scruff of his neck and made him vote. That then made Jesus divine. It was like a vote in parliament.

In fact, it was politically motivated the whole thing. The other religions of that time had leaders who were divine, so if the Christians didn't have one, they'd lose out. So they had to have a divine leader, that's all.

Believe in rebirth is not against the Catholic doctrine. It was suppressed at the time of the emperor Justinian and his ferocious wife. They didn't like the idea of rebirth because they had done such evil things, they didn't like the idea that they might come back as pigs or something. They tried to have the pope suppress the idea, but he wouldn't do it. He must have been quite a good man. He refused to suppress it, but it disappeared anyway. The idea just isn't talked about now, but it's not against the Catholic doctrine.

Isn't Jesus the Son of God?

This is what they voted for. There isn't a shadow of evidence that Jesus said that. It would have been looked upon as the greatest blasphemy in Judea at the time. He would have never said anything of that sort.

Jesus said something before he died about God forsaking him.

Yes, but where did that come from? What is the evidence for that? Who was there to hear it? Who was there to take it down? They didn't have tape recorders.

What do think about the kinds of experiences that people in different religions have where they are overwhelmed by bliss through their faith?

Samādhi. There are many ways to *samādhi*, not just one. You can reach it by faith. It is quite possible. The most suitable way to attain *samādhi* will depend on a person's character. Buddhist chanting can help some people a great deal in that direction. It calms them down and it leads gradually in the direction of *samādhi*. *Samādhi* experiences are so varied, and so bizarre at times, that almost anything can go under that heading. What is the value of seeing a vision of the Virgin Mary? What does it do? The thing that is really required there is wisdom — and it doesn't lead to that.

Is it true that Christian ideas will tend to bring Christian images?

To some extent that's true, but I am not sure how far that goes. The tendency is to project one's own images, but there do seem to be some archetypal forms. To give an example: the idea that angels have wings. If you look at the images of *devatās* in Thailand, it's not wings they have, it's fire, but they look very similar. The halo also seems to be archetypal.

The practice of Laung Por Sot from Wat Paknam is based on *nimittas*. First you see light, then you see the gross human body, then the subtle human body — all as *nimittas*. You should see the *nimittas* in order: *sīla*, *samādhi*, *paññā*, *vimutti*, *vimuttiñāḍassana*. After those five *nimittas* come up then you go to the gross *deva* body and the subtle *deva* body, then the gross *brahma* body and the subtle *brahma* body, then from the *arūpa* Brahma body to the

Sotāpanna body all the way up to the *Arahant* body. But I never understood what it all leads to. My question always was: do these *nimittas* come up of themselves naturally, or do we have to produce them? Nobody could answer that question. I found I couldn't maintain confidence in the practice, so I turned to *ānāpānasati*, because that is what the Buddha did.

The idea in the Tibetan practice is that these would be things that would come up after you died naturally. You would meet these beings.

I suspect in the Tibetan practice that applies only to someone who has actually done the practice and attained *samādhi*. They would meet those *nimittas* because they have trained themselves to do it. One mustn't expect the ordinary person to experience that. As far as I can make out, the process of death for the ordinary person can be almost as varied as life. That's because peoples' minds and what's in them vary so much that you can't expect a standard process to cover all of them. You can say a certain type of experience must happen, but as to exactly what takes place and how, the imagery and experiences probably vary enormously.

How should we deal with fear?

When fear comes up, and that's the time when you have to face the fear and overcome it. It's important. The *kammaṭṭhāna bhikkhus* try to go out to places where they will be forced to face their fear. The chief way is to find an environment where wild tigers roam about. When they are in the wilderness and there is a tiger nearby, they know perfectly well that the tiger can kill them at any time. They have no gun, no defense except Dhamma. If they do not get down to Dhamma, the tiger might come, they cannot be certain. They say when it's like that, it's extraordinary how the *kilesas*, instead of being their enemies, become friendly and let go all together. The practice goes extremely well — very, very strong. Having experienced that once, some of them go searching for places where there is a particular danger. They find a place where tigers walk back and forth and go and sit right beside it. The reason is that when they hear a tiger roar, the *citta* goes straight into *samādhi*. Some say they can't get into deep *samādhi* under any other conditions. They have tried but it won't work. But when they are face with an imminent danger, it works every time.

It's a bamboo jungle. In a bamboo jungle you get clumps of bamboo and grass in between. They burn the corpses on wood there. If you go to bamboo jungle there is nothing there except the bamboo and old fires. People are afraid that ghosts are there as well. You hear stories from people doing meditation practice there and they heard something outside and they were afraid. They heard this going on and the more they heard the more afraid they got. Eventually they opened their eyes and what it was a dog chewing something.

Ajaan Mahā Boowa told us a story about a man who came to the village and asked if anyone wanted to ride on the back of a tiger — like riding a horse. A lot of the young fellows said that they would like to. He told them to meet him at such and such a place the next day. This man had what they call a “vijjā”, a special knowledge. He had some skill at calling the tigers so the tigers would come to him. As a tiger approached, he said to the first volunteer: “See that tiger there...go and get on its back and ride it up to me. It won't harm you.” The young man was so scared that he refused to do it. He said the same thing to the next volunteer and got the same response. Eventually he got the same response from all of them except one man. He's the person that told Ajaan Mahā Boowa this story. That man said he noticed that the tigers hadn't done anything. They looked to him like passive dogs, so he went and did it. He rode it up to the old man. Then the old man said “ok now go and ride the second one”, and he did. He rode them all up to the old man. The old man then gave him a mantra, or saying, and told the young man to call the tigers. They came to him too. The old man told him to ride those tigers also. He said: “Now you've got the skill, so you're on your own. The only thing is, you must never boast about it and you must never kill a tiger. If you keep to this you'll be all right.” He said it was true, that he used to ride them in the jungle. He said once he was riding a tiger and it got so restless that he couldn't control it, almost like something inside of it had taken hold of it. He knew something was coming on the path, so he got off the tiger and let it go — it leapt away. Some of the villagers had extraordinary abilities. I am afraid most of that has gone now, they all have television sets instead.

There was a tiger that had killed a buffalo, and they wanted to catch that tiger. They build a very high stockade around a buffalo. They left a place the tiger could get in and he did. He got hold of this buffalo in his jaws and

swung it over his shoulder. Then he started climbing the stockade. Think of the strength. He got about half way up and his muscles gave way and he fell and broke his neck. They have terrific strength, so I don't think they'd worry much about someone on their back.

Where there any tigers when you first came here?

I did hear once of a tiger in the district. It was following a bunch of pigs. They must have been its food source. I don't know what happened to it, whether it was killed or not.

They don't generally kill people do they?

If it's the ordinary tiger they won't normally kill a person unless they fear for their young or if the person has got it cornered, if they're afraid of that person maybe then too. Mostly tigers aren't afraid and they won't attack a person. If they become man-eaters then they will. They lose all fear. They became man-eaters mainly for three reasons. Firstly, when they have been shot and they are wounded. Secondly, if they put there paws on a porcupine and the quills go up into the paw and get stuck so they can't get them out. A porcupine quill is no small thing – they're very long, sharp and hard. The third reason is that they are old and can't catch their normal prey. When they can't find food in their normal way, then they might eat humans. Those are the three reasons they might go to man-eating, and once they do they're quite dangerous. There are stories of a single tiger killing five hundred people.

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Samādhi and Jhāna

You must realize that the repetition of *Buddho* is only something to hold your attention. When the attention is there already and you are getting calm, *Buddho* will drop off by itself automatically. Don't try holding on to it. Then you will find the feeling of the breath is hardly noticeable. It is very difficult to recognize. If you find the breath goes so you can't find it, keep your attention on the same place that you've been attending to. If you keep your attention there, usually you'll find that the breath comes back again. Eventually, if it goes to the point where the breath does actually stop, you will probably be more in a state of the absorption.

It's alright to stop breathing provided you don't use any force. If it occurs while gaining calm, there is no harm. If you use any force at all, it's no good. I don't know what happens physiologically, but we should not worry about that. The body is quite capable of looking after itself.

I read about somebody who went to a festival in India. There were a lot of yogis at this festival. There was a place there where yogis were buried underground, but they left an arm sticking out. People were supposed to put money in that hand. The person writing the story saw a hand sticking out so he put some money in it, then slowly it closed and went down into the ground. It soon came out again, as if it wasn't enough. I don't know if that was a complete fake or not. They can leave a bit of space around themselves underground so they can breathe, and since they're being completely still they don't need much oxygen. They may get enough oxygen in that way, or they may have tubes somewhere else that you can't see. It can be faked quite easily.

I come out of this state of samādhi with anxiety about the breathing and feeling it, not feeling it.

If you come out like that, ok, never mind. If you feel lost like that, then review the feeling of being lost. Just look at it and examine it, don't try to grab at anything. When you feel lost like that, the *kilesas* come up and encourage you to grab at something to get security. Don't do that. Try and hold it at that point. When you hold it like that, the *kilesas* are not active.

That moment can be quite quiet, so it is a point where you can learn a lot about the tendency to grab with the *kilesas*, or how the *kilesas* to come up and make you grab at something. Hold back and say: “I won't do that...I won't grab...I'll just leave it...I'll just watch it, just watch the state and examine it.” Holding back like that will feel a bit uncomfortable, but that's ok. Just examine it as it is. You can learn a lot then.

The anxiety came up and I came out and thought now I should investigate it.

Don't think about what you should investigate. Investigate whatever is there at the moment, whatever it is. It's as though you have been doing something and you stand back and look at it to see what the situation is. You stand back and watch it without trying to do anything. It's as though you're looking, trying to see what state you're in. It's as though you're separate from it and you're watching. When anything like that comes up, our natural conditioning makes us think: “Where am I? I better grab something”. These thoughts come up straight away. Then you are lost.

If you feel that there is nothing there, then examine that. What is this “nothing there”? Examine it closely. Is there really nothing there? Usually it's not the case. If you learn to do that, then you can learn to become gradually more and more mindful of your situation until whenever anything comes up you can just sit back and know it and watch it. That is going toward a very good mindful state where you can just sit back and watch it like that without trying to prescribe what's coming up. Really that is the best state of practice, but normally we cannot do it because the *kilesas* come up straight away. When the *kilesas* come up, we must have a *parikamma* to hold on to. When more skill develops, we do not need a *parikamma* because we one can go directly into a state where we just watch it.

It's the Dhammadinna Sutta. She was an Arahant. Her husband came and asked her some questions. He asked about feeling: what was unpleasant feeling? She said: “Unpleasant feelings are those states where there is a predominance of unpleasant feeling and a little bit of pleasant feeling. There is a lot of *dukkha* and little *sukkha*.” He then asked about pleasant feelings. She said: “It's those states where there is a predominance of pleasant feeling and a little bit of *dukkha*, unpleasant feeling”. He asked about when there is no feeling. She said: “If there is no feeling, it's unpleasant when one doesn't

understand and still has ignorance; but when one has understanding, it's pleasant." In other words, in state where there is nothing there, if one still has *avijjā*, then one doesn't like it. If a person has gone beyond and can understand that, he knows it's the right state.

Ajaan Mahā Boowa says the *Anattālakkaṇa Sutta* is unfinished. The *Adittapariyāya Sutta* is complete. The *Adittapariyāya Sutta* says what you should do after you realize that the five *khandhas* are on fire. It tells what else needs to be done. Whereas in the *Anattālakkaṇa Sutta*, having shown all of them to be *anattā*, it then stops there. It doesn't tell you the rest of it.

Ajaan Mahā Boowa says the Buddha's teachings are all there in the *suttas*, but the problem is to be able to see them. It's the interpretation that's difficult. It would seem almost certain that there has been a lot of editing in the *Ti-piṭaka*. The parts we can see are correct are those where there are things that are put often — they are probably correct, but they may not be complete. Nowhere, that I know, does it explain the difference between *samādhi* and *jhāna*. It talks a lot about *jhāna*, but it's very difficult to know what's meant by that term. If you look at the first *jhāna*, in particular, the factors that make up the first *jhāna* are the same factors that you have in *samādhi*. So what's the difference? The difference must be internal, in that case. They come up in entirely different ways. As far as I can see, the factors of *samādhi* and factors of *jhāna* are no different. *Apanā samādhi* is where you get into the heart and there is just knowing left. That's sounds very much the same as the same as fourth *jhāna*. There is a description in the *suttas*, and the characteristics are the same. I do think the approach to them may be different. Ajaan Mahā Boowa says that *jhāna* is only necessary for those people that have that faculty. If they have the faculty of *jhāna*, and it's natural for them, then they must go that way. Someone who does not have that faculty shouldn't try to develop it.

I keep a very open mind on the meaning of *jhāna*. Ajaan Mahā Boowa doesn't like talking about *jhāna* unless a person has experience in it. He says you can't talk about it unless the person has experienced it. He never talks openly about *jhāna*. When he talks about *jhāna*, he just sticks exactly to what the *suttas* say, and that's all.

If I remember there are sixteen levels in the *rūpa jhānas*. It is explained in the Abhidhamma — the different types of consciousness, the different forms of *cittas* and the *cetasikas*. But I am not sure how necessary it is to know about that.

There was a man that used to come here. He lived in Norway. He was actually German. He lived in England since before the war. He used to go to Ajaan Thet, who used to talk a lot about *jhāna*. One day the Norwegian talked to Ajaan Mahā Boowa about *jhāna*. After he left I said to Ajaan Mahā Boowa: I don't think he knows what he's talking about with *jhāna*." Ajaan Mahā Boowa said: "I don't like talking about *jhāna* at all." From the way that he said that I felt that *jhāna* is too personal to talk about to someone that doesn't know what one's talking about. Whereas when we talk about *samādhi*, that's more external — it's much more a thing of the mind. *Jhāna* is much deeper.

When you enter samādhi is there happiness?

The happiness of *samādhi* is a quietness. A quietness is there. If my understanding is right, *jhāna* is much more dynamic. The Ajaans from Ajaan Mun's lineage, like Ajaan Khao, Ajaan Mahā Boowa and Ajaan Fuñh, never teach *jhāna*, not openly anyway. They might teach it to some specific people individually, but openly they never teach it. It's not a general teaching, because only specific people can attain it. Whereas *samādhi* is open to everyone.

Somebody who goes the way of *jhāna* must use that in their practice. That is the way for them but whether they are close to Nibbāna or not will depend on how strong their *kilesas* are. Even though we're all headed in the same direction, each of us has to go along our own path. Paths are not all identical by any means.

Where would you put emotions, with the kilesas or khandhas?

Kilesas often use the emotions, but the emotions are not the *kilesas*. The emotions come up mainly in *sankhāra khandha*. What's difficult for us from the West to realize is that the center is the heart. That is the active one, so the emotions are much more the central thing that is happening. The

emotions give rise to thoughts, speech or actions. It springs up from the heart and it goes out into thinking, speaking or acting. This indicates that the thinking apparatus is much more like a pair of hands, something to do work with – a computer if you like. The computer is not the same as the person working the computer. Nor is the computer the one that has the purpose. The purpose is in the user. The person using it is down in the heart. The computer is the one that does the work. Because we have physical bodies, it's difficult for us to get past the body imagery. We tend to get the idea that we are located up in the head, probably because four of the five external senses are up there and the thinking seems to be up there. So we get the idea that most of what happens, goes on up there. In fact, the analogy of the television set is much more appropriate. What you see appears at the end of the tube, but the mechanism for it isn't located there. That's just the display, but the source of it is the important thing. It's the same with us: the heart is the center, the real source, and where exactly the various processes go on doesn't matter much.

How do you suggest working with difficult emotions?

There is a lot of attachment in difficult emotions, a lot of clinging at the back of them. The clinging is a form of "I am". That's the main problem. Although you may try to defeat them, who is the one trying to defeat them? In fact, you are merely trying to alter them to your own satisfaction. It's the "I am" at work all the time. If nothing else, what you can do in a case like that is just let them go on and watch them. That's about all you can do. Just watch them see what happens. Don't try to alter things. One of the troubles we have is we always try to change things. They're changing fast enough anyway, but we want them to go our way. We try to force them to go in our direction, the way we think they should go. When we do that, because we're putting our fingers in the pie, it usually goes the wrong way. Because the way we want them to go is the way the *kilesas* want them to go.

We are riddled with symbols. We've got symbols for everything. We've got symbols for our emotional states. When a particular emotional state comes up, we know it because we have a symbol for it. It's hard to define what these symbols inside us are. Often they're just feelings, but we know them quite distinctly. We know the symbol for them. We place symbols on external things as well. When we say "I've got it, I know it." That means we've caught

hold of a symbol, but we haven't caught hold of what is really happening there. What's happening there is most complex.

We must come to see that what's really happening is almost like a whirlpool, a whirlpool of activity. We must realize that this is what's going on. If we try to change that, it will go the wrong way, it's bound to. If we just watch it, we will see that it's *anicca* – and it will go of its own accord. One has to realize that there is a vortex of activity occurring in and around us all the time, like a whirlpool spinning around. We experience this, but because we can't catch the complexity of it we have to see it as something we can catch hold of. So we make a symbol. For instance, we say “a motor car”. That's just a symbol. What is a car really? It is a hundred thousand different parts, but we put that one symbol on to it. Similarly, a “house” is composed of all sorts of bits and pieces. We put symbols on things like that all the time. Our minds just aren't capable of handling the complexity of what's really there. We just can't hold it all, so we have to simplify. It's the method of making symbols that we use.

“Me” is a symbol too, a changing symbol. Symbols aren't necessarily fixed. They can change and adapt. To give you an idea: the word “chair” is a symbol. If you think of the word “chair”, it will bring up some mental image as a symbol. But there are a thousand different types of chairs, yet they all come under the same heading. We have a range of symbols that we can adapt to fit different circumstances. Part of it is the form, part of it is the use, and part of it is the location where they're found.

Symbols go even further: we group things together to make symbols. We identify something out of a whole mass of other things. For instance, we identify one tree out of a whole forest. Why do we identify that one particular object as the tree? It's just our way of making symbols, to identify things so that we can grasp a situation and see it in terms of cause and effect. The same applies to internal objects, like emotions. We must realize how we try to grasp hold of them by naming them. Internal phenomena like emotional states must be carefully observed. We mustn't simply dismiss them by saying: “That's hatred. That's greed.” We must look at them as they occur inside; see those phenomena just the way they are, regardless of what we call them. It's very important to understand the nature of symbols; they can be seen everywhere.

The only things that are not symbols are direct sensations. We can't put symbols to them, we just know them, and that's all. In knowing them, we cannot define them at all except as their nature: like when we see the color red, we know that. But how can you define red? If you want to tell somebody else what that color is, you use the name "red", but all you are doing is appealing to the other person's experience of red. But you don't know what that person's experience is, whether it's the same as yours or not. In fact, there is no way of knowing, because you cannot know another person's experiences.

Symbolizing is a way of simplifying. The symbol is nature's way to store an enormous amount of information, knowledge, and understanding within a very limited brain, or mind. We have to group. Then we can deal with just that group, so we do not need to consider the totality of what's in it and how complex it is. We've got a name for it, and that's enough. If we can name the devil we have defeated him. In other words, we have been able to grab hold of him in some way. However, in meditation practice, I think it's very often the other way around: if you can name the devil, he's defeated you.

I don't think it's so difficult to watch the *citta*, but what is difficult is to distinguish what's there, to distinguish what is *sankhāra*, what is *saññā*, what is *viññāṇa*. This is difficult because everything is changing so rapidly. Again, when you actually see what these things are, it's more like a whirlpool than anything else. They are all there inside the *citta*, but you don't know what you're looking at. You need a lot of work in order to distinguish these things.

How would you define sankhāra?

The best definition of the *sankhāra khandha* is that "it puts together what is put together". *Sankhāras* are always building things up, creating things. You think about a person and immediately you associate that person with a location, and you associate the location and the person with a time when you were there, then with something they said or some knowledge about them. It's really a building up all the time. It's built up on that one subject. *Sankhāra* pulls in things from all over the place, particularly from memory. It pulls something in from memory, then it pulls something else in from sensation, constantly adding to what's already there.

Is it kamma?

It's mainly the results of *kamma*. If it is *kamma*, there must be volition first, and then there is the doing of something. Usually that volition comes up from an emotional basis: "I want. I don't want." Some reaction takes place. For example, if you think about a person and something he said and then hatred comes up because you didn't like it, that thought which has come up with hatred is *kamma*. If it's merely thinking casually about a person, that's *kamma* too, but it is very weak. *Kamma* is mainly produce by *sankhāra*. This is a very important point. *Saññā* is much more resultant. *Viññāṇa* is more resultant too. Feeling, *vedanā*, is resultant. The *vedanā* often provides the tone we take toward whatever it is being thought about. For instance, unpleasant feeling I don't like. Pleasant feeling I like. Feeling is the touchstone. It is the criterion that we test against to find out: "Do I like or not, is this good or bad for me?" All the *khandhas* are very important. They are probably the best field of investigation for most people. Try to see how they associate and work together.

The body is an interesting investigation too. You can divide up the body in various ways. According to the physical elements is probably the main one. We can analyze the human body in terms of earth, water, fire, and air. We can look at the body in that way, but these four are actually just symbols. When looked at externally, we can never find an "earth element" anywhere. Nor can we find air, water or fire elements. They cannot be found. So what we have with the physical elements is a method of analyzing material. And a mind is required to do the analysis – we have to think about those things. When the mind analyses, the mind thinks about earth, water, fire and air, but these are merely symbols that the mind applies. Outside the mind, we cannot find these elements at all. It is useful for some people to investigate the body in terms of the four elements. What we are dealing with here is a method. If the method works, then use it. When we are analyzing the body, we want to see this body for what it is: it's not me, it's not mine; it's not such a wonderful thing. One way to do this is to examine the elements. That's one method.

Another method is to see the loathsomeness of it. Of course ultimately there is no loathsomeness at all. It's just a theory. One practical way of trying to see the nature of the body is to think terms of it being loathsome. We have to use these methods.

They say that doctors have more difficulty seeing the repulsive nature of the body. That's because they have seen the interior of the body so much the *kilesas* have found a defense against it. A doctor must get through that defense if he wants to really understand the body. That's not easy. The doctor deals with the body as mechanisms and illnesses, the ways it functions and malfunctions. The mechanic deals with a car in much the same way. Essentially it's the same thing. There is no emotional reaction there. The only emotional reaction at all may be an interest in how things happen — the doctor sees a strange misshapen kidney and he's then interested straight away. Over time, such indifference creates a big block, a barrier in the *citta*. The *citta* doesn't probe into the body's true nature. Instead of seeing the body as it actually is, one looks at symbols again. One makes the body and its parts into mere symbols. And those symbols come from the *kilesas*. The *kilesas* have all sorts of tricks.

For most people you can say the *kilesas* is what the person is. They are the person. The *kilesas* are so powerful because they use the human mind. It's only when we start doing the practice and get calm that we can begin to see this. The calm of *samādhi* makes the *kilesas* rest. When they rest, what is *kilesas* and what is not *kilesas* becomes more apparent. That is how the *kilesas* can be seen. One can see the difference between the state when the *kilesas* are there and when they're not there. You have to be cautious, however, because some of them may trick you into thinking there not there when they actually are.

The *kilesas* grab hold of the emotions as one of their main tools. Because of that the emotions and the *kilesas* are often identified. In fact, they are practically identical, but not always. It's easier to understand when you can see the *kilesas* as separate from the *citta*. In any case, normally there will still be some *kilesas* there, the *kilesas* of *moha*. Because if there weren't any, that would be Nibbāna. Usually, the only times a person gets free from the *kilesas* are in deep, dreamless sleep and in *appanā samādhi*. There the *kilesas* are quiet. In *appanā samādhi*, there is just “knowing.” Because there's just

knowing, it's not a state you can use in any way. You can't really use wisdom at the time of *appanā samādhi*. It's gone beyond that. The aftereffects of withdrawing from *appanā samādhi* mean that the *kilesas* are weak. Because they're weak wisdom tends to work very effectively then.

It is important when doing meditation to review your purpose for doing it every now and then. What for? When you are developing wisdom, it's a very helpful to go through the logic and come to a conclusion about things, especially with oneself. You see that something must be true because you understand the logic behind it, but you still cannot realize its true nature on a deeper level. So you must go over it time after time. For example, if you want to realize the nature of sound, you listen to a sound. You know that externally it's just vibration, a vibration in your ear. When it gets inside it becomes nervous impulses, which are not the same as sound at all. When it is just nervous pulses it is not yet sound; but when those pulses reach the brain, we get this peculiar thing which we call sound. Of course, externally there is no sound at all — it's merely vibration. But we don't realize it. We can't realize that sound is something inside ourselves. Until we can realize it on a deeper level, it's good to go through the logic of how mechanically it gets inside and reaches the brain — where sound arises. Try to realize that sound is an internal phenomena — it's all inside of us.

It's a valuable method to use with something like sound that follows a logical train. If you still can't see it clearly then follow the train over and over again until you begin to realize that it's all internal. It's almost as though, after a time the mind switches over and sees it as being internal.

In doing a practice like *ānāpānasati*, you may reach a level where the mind is subtle and sounds appear almost like they're amplified. When a sound comes in suddenly, one automatically reverts to one's normal mode of hearing and thinking. Because of that, one can't suddenly see it from inside then because one's caught unaware. When a sound persists, then one can use that to get inside. It's the same with sight, or any of the senses; they all work in pretty much the same way.

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Investigating Feelings

Feelings of tiredness mostly come from the *kilesas*. There is a lot of difference between genuine tiredness and false tiredness. False tiredness is when you feel sleepy or drowsy, and your mind cannot think very well. Genuine tiredness comes when one's done a lot of work and probably hasn't had much sleep. It's almost as though something is buzzing inside your head, but the mind is still perfectly active. When it's like that, you know that you must take some rest. The two kinds of tiredness are quite different. Most tiredness is *kilesas*. I'd say 80 per cent is *kilesas*. If people are forced to work — like in wartime when bombs are dropping about and they have to work for long periods of time — they become tired. But it's not that their minds are tired so they can't think. They are simply exhausted. In that case, it comes to a point where they must take some rest. It's quite a different thing from the tiredness or sloth and torpor that come from the *kilesas*.

First of all, tiredness is just feeling. It comes up because of feeling. In the *Paṭiccasamuppāda* formula there is *passa*, the contact of sensation. *Passa* gives rise to the feeling or the conditions of feeling. Feeling, in turn, is a condition for the *kilesas*. It's the feeling that's the condition. Feeling arises, and then the *kilesas* arise. Feeling arises from sensation, from the contact of sensation through any of the senses, including the mind. When these arise, then feeling arises. One also has the alternative that the *kilesas* may not arise. The arising of feeling simply means that there are the conditions for the *kilesas* to arise. Whether they arise or not depends on a person's own volition. They don't have to arise. We have the option of accepting them or not. That's where our freedom of will comes in. It comes in at that point.

The *kilesas* grab hold of the *citta*. One of the fundamental tricks of the *kilesas* is to build up a self. They create the self idea. It's always the *kilesas* that create the delusion that we exist in relationship to something else, meaning there must be a self in relation to what's not-self. The *kilesas* then believe that what matters is the advantage to self, so they do whatever they can to promote self. They do it by seductive means, or by frightening means, or by whatever means they can. Ultimately, the troubles we experience are all caused by the idea of self. When there is self, there is also what is not-self; and there is the relationship between them. The relationship is one where

that which is not-self defines self, and that which is self defines the not-self. The two sides work together. Without the not-self, the self just disappears, it means nothing. It must always be there, always pointing to self, to “I am”. If you ask someone: “Who are you, what are you?” they’ll tell who or what they are in relationship to all sorts of things, none of which say who or what they really are.

The trouble we face with the *kilesas* is that we ourselves are the *kilesas*. What we think of as ourselves is a creation of the *kilesas*. Our very nature is the *kilesas*. They’re what we know. Because they have become integrated into our very nature, they have the strength of the *citta* behind them. Without the *citta*, they’re nothing. The *citta* is the power behind the *kilesas*, and they usurp this power. This power should be something quite different, but the *kilesas* grab it and take it for their own use. They don't care about what happens to the *citta*. But, in the end, the *citta* is the one that’s responsible, the one that receives the results from it – the *dukkha*, of course.

Ordinary feelings are more important for you to investigate at the moment. You have to work from what's gross to what's subtle. It’s no good trying to find out things that are very subtle when you have a lot of gross things that you must learn about. For that reason, it’s always taught that you should contemplate the body first, because that is the grossest part of oneself. It’s the easiest to see. There it is, you can see it, you can feel it, you can grasp hold of it. To go more subtle than that is only useful if something is going on in the background that pushes one in that direction. Some people may find it easier to investigate feeling, but then body and feeling are usually lumped together. Although feeling is more a mental thing and body a more physical thing, the two go very closely together.

When investigating the body, how do we know the body, how do we experience it? We know the body through feeling. It’s hard to experience the body any other way. Of course, we can think of body in terms of its constituent parts and so on. These are things we’ve seen in the world and learned from the world. We know about them. But we actually experience the body internally as feeling. That is the main source of our experience, but not the whole of it. When we are dealing with the *kilesas*, we must use whichever method gives us the best results. Because of that, to take the body as bits and pieces is perfectly valid as a meditation practice.

You must always keep in mind that the Buddha's teaching is never absolute truth. It's always a method, a skillful means to an end. We cannot explain absolute truth, there is no way. What we're dealing with here is a method. It's a relative truth in the world. If you search, you can easily find holes in it. But you must realize the whole of the teaching is a method to take you from your present deluded state to a state where the *citta* is clear enough and knows enough to make the "jump to Nibbāna", so to speak. You have to raise the *citta*'s level up to that point, then you can get there. If you try to do it without raising the level of the *citta*, there's no hope of success. It's like someone saying that they are going to jump to the moon: they can try as much as they like, but they won't be able to do it – that's all. The only way to get there is to find a rocket. When one has done all the proper training with that, then one might be able to get there.

What is "feeling within feeling"?

This has always been a problematic phrase. If you look strictly at the Pāli, it can mean one of two things. First of all it can mean *vedanānupassī vedanā...* The word *anupassī* can mean "the one who does". The one who is doing feeling contemplation, on feeling. This can be taken to mean that one is *not* doing body contemplation. In other words, if one is doing body contemplation and goes to feeling, one is doing it with the idea of contemplating the body as a body. If one is doing feeling contemplation, then one takes feeling as the basis for the body, and not any of the others. That's one meaning that can be given to feeling within feeling.

This can be thought of in quite a few ways. It is not something that we can say definitely what it means. Most of the ways are right as well. Actually, the exact meaning doesn't really matter. If you do the contemplations of body, feeling, *citta* and *dhamma*, I think it will come out all right. You'll find the way to go.

I suppose you could take it to mean that one investigates feeling without taking it merely as an intellectual exercise. You do it on the actual experience itself. It's always been a bit of a puzzle.

In the *Paṭipadā*, Ajaan Mahā Boowa talks to Ajaan Khao about investigating feeling. He tells Ajaan Khao how Ajaan Mun came to him when he was sick with malaria and berated him quite a lot. Ajaan Mun was afraid that Ajaan Mahā Boowa might give way to the pain. He told him: “You’ve got to get down to it. Examine the feeling, investigate it. Don’t give way.” He said that when a *bhikkhu* is in a lot of pain, he should definitely get down and examine the feeling. That is something a *bhikkhu* must do. Even some lay people who become sick don't give way. Ajaan Khao told a story about an old man on his death bed who wanted to see Ajaan Mun before he died. So Ajaan Mun went to visit him. As soon as he saw Ajaan Mun he sat straight up and showed he was extremely glad to see him. He was very, very happy to see Ajaan Mun. The people around were really surprised because normally he couldn't sit up by himself, they always had to help him. But as soon as he saw Ajaan Mun, he sat straight up. The man died soon after Ajaan Mun left, but instead of being afraid, he was full of happiness — he was very happy right up to the last moment. Ajaan Mun brought this up to tell Ajaan Khao: “If a lay person can do that, why can't you.”

I had trouble with my knee once. While sitting for *Pāṭimokkha* recitation, my knee was bent at an awkward angle, so it was very painful. Investigating it worked quite well then. I investigated and thought about it: “I know this pain. This pain isn't the one here, the one who know it. It's not me. Whatever I am, it's not me. It's just a pain, that's all — just a feeling. That feeling is something separate. Why should I get all upset about it? I am not upset about pain in somebody else.” After that it became rather interesting. I kept on looking at the pain changing until it eventually died away.

Pain in the head seems so hard to get away from.

Again it's the identification of oneself being in the head. One way to overcome that is to put yourself outside looking at it. Just look at it. See where it is and how it changes. After all, it's pain just the same. Often headaches of that sort are due to eyes and pressure on the eyes. It feels like pressure on the eyes. One should look on things of that sort as opportunities to do something. Ajaan Khao said that his meditation always gained much more when he was sick than it did at normal times. He said that whether his investigations actually relieved the pain or not wasn't so important; but the understanding he gained to overcome the *kilesas* was very important.

Is pain the result of kamma?

Yes, in the sense that the body is a result of *kamma*. If you want to have a body of this sort, you must expect pain and all sorts of troubles. The human body is subject to that. Pain is a result of *kamma*, but we mustn't think all results are caused by *kamma*. What we can say is: the results that do not come from *kamma* are avoidable; those that are from *kamma*, you can't avoid. You can try to remedy them but, try as you will, it just won't work. In the field of *kamma*, it is very important to try to work out from the results you experience what type of *kamma* you have tended to produce in the past, and then to watch out that you don't produce that kind of *kamma* again. This is important. If you can do that, you can see your own faults and the types of things you tend to do that are wrong. You can see that the results of *kamma* you experience in the present originate from doing the same sort of things in the past. It is impossible to know all of the ins and outs of *kamma*. The Buddha said one shouldn't even try, that one will simply go mad trying to do it. He said that only the Buddhas can know *kamma* in its entirety; not even the Arahants can do it. But by careful observation you can still understand quite a lot about how *kamma* works and the principles behind it. You can often see specific instances of *kamma* in oneself, and you can probably see the ways of *kamma* at work in other people, to some extent. That's a perfectly valid practice.

The results of your *kamma* in this life will set the situation for your next life, unless you've done enough work to go beyond *kamma*, but not many have. At the time of death, the results of *kamma* set the situation for the next life — that's very important. You must see what types of *kamma* tend to produce that. The types of *kamma* are those brought about by: *kāmatāṅhā*, *bhavataṅhā* and *vibhavataṅhā*. *Bhavataṅhā* is wanting the situation to perpetuate indefinitely, whatever one's situation is. When one feels happy with one's situation in life, one wants that to go indefinitely. On the other hand, if one wants it to change and become something other, that's *vibhavataṅhā*, not wanting to be what one is. Some people are not satisfied with what they are. They want to become something else, something that they think is much better or higher or whatever. If this desire is strong enough, it can have

effects. If it's a desire to enter the path and strive to become an Arahant, that's ok as long as they don't want it so much that they delude themselves into believing that they've attained it already. That also can happen, and often does.

I had a “medium” give me information about a past life that explains my problems in meditation. Can this be useful information?

You have to see for yourself if it fits. As with any of these psychic readings, if the psychic person has real ability, and if they are totally disinterested, they can give correct results. But if the least little bit of self-interest is present, the information is likely to be wrong — because the *kilesas* get into it. If it's free from *kilesas*, it's quite likely to be correct. The problem is, you never know whether the information is actually correct or not. In any case, if it leads you to some positive method of practice, then it can be very useful.

Some people have the faculty of looking into the past — they can review their own past lives. The Buddha had that ability. He could go back eons. But it's not necessary for everyone to do that. We talk about “going back”, it isn't really going backwards in time at all. It's a form of memory, and it's in the present. If you really went back, that would be real — that would be presented as real. But reviewing past lives isn't like that. It's just images or sensations coming up in the present. So the whole of the past is really memory. Because of that, we can deal with the past as images and knowledge of the past that we see in meditation practice, or as the results of the past coming up in the present. They're the same thing, but they're used in a different way. So if we cannot go back to the past, we have to deal with all the phenomena we find in ourselves in the present, here and now. Deal with it there and see what's wrong, where the troubles lie.

It's important to try to locate what we might call the “ground of the *citta*”. That's the level at which the *citta* normally works. What it tends to always revert back to. This is important. If you look often you can locate the spot that it seems to revert to inside yourself. The ground of the *citta* means the level of the *citta*. The *citta* can experience many different levels. Our *cittas* are on the human level. But there is quite a lot of variation in that, from people that are extremely low and coarse to people who are very high, near to the *deva* realm. It's quite a large range. Where are our *cittas* normally

located, at what level? At special times we may move away from it, going below or above it. But it has a normal level that it tends to revert to. This is important to know. If we can gain some understanding of our own level, we can possibly see where our faults are, what's wrong and what we have to do.

What is meant by the level of the citta?

The level of the *citta* will change at times, but it tends to revert to that basic level. If a person practices in good ways, or in bad ways, and they go on doing that for a long time, the level of the *citta* can change. It can go up or go down. The ground of the *citta* can change. For example, if a person who is normally quite friendly gets in to a long-lasting situation that causes a lot of anger to come up, that anger can take over and become the *citta*'s basic level. We also see it in people who have mental trouble. When they become stuck in that mental state for a long time, then that becomes the level of the *citta*. It can change in that way. One of the problems we have is that we all tend to think that things are fixed inside. That's not so. They can change all the time, going this way or that way. It depends entirely on the conditions that produce the state. Conditions that occur very frequently can bias the *citta* in a certain direction.

To put it in another way: when we develop habits, those habits tend to take hold of us. When we become thoroughly involved in those habits, they can become so strong that we just become part of them. So that can change us.

In *samsāra* nothing is fixed, everything is waving about all the time. When a person becomes enlightened, the *citta* is then fixed. It has reverted back to its original state. On the other hand, the five *khandhas* still continue functioning until they break apart. When they break apart, the person — the *citta* — has total freedom. There is not much you can say about that state. I haven't done it. I know the direction but I don't know what it is.

You said the other day that "we will create a black box for our next life".

The "black box" is the mind. That simile means that everything we know through our senses goes into the mind, which then interprets all those things in a certain way. All we know is the way that we interpret them. In fact, we don't know what the things out there really are at all. We have our way of

interpreting them, and that's all. We know the information that the black box is telling us, but we don't actually know what is on the other side of the black box. Because we have to use the black box to access the world, we don't know what the truth of things out there really is. Everything is filtered through the black box of the mind.

The tendency is for the mind to work like the simile of the black box, incorporating all our senses and the interpretation put on them. It's known by science that this is true. People perceive colors in different ways. Not everybody sees colors in the same way. In other words, the sensation you get from a color is different in different people. I think that is known by science from physiological evidence. But it is really much worse than that because science doesn't know the interpretation the mind puts on incoming sensations. Science cannot analyze that. But the interpretation put on sensations is the important thing. What actually happens is that a sensation goes in through the retina of the eye, which then changes it into nervous information that is no longer the same as what came in. It has changed entirely. That then goes to the brain, which somehow sorts it out and presents an image to *viññāṇa*. *Viññāṇa* receives and accepts it, so we take it in and that's what we know. *Viññāṇa* actually it goes through a whole series of stages. When you ask, "what did that originally come from"? All we can say is what our experience is. We assume it came from something out there, a certain color or shape or whatever it is. We don't really know though. In that sense, the whole world is a world of mind.

In practical terms, I am not sure this knowledge makes much difference because most people will act in the same way as though the world outside is something real. It appears like that to people because they have been brought up to think like that. But from the point of view of investigating and learning about oneself this knowledge is important. We can learn that the way we think and the ways other people think are not actually the same. We ourselves see things in a certain way, but somebody else sees them in a completely different way. It's not necessarily the case that either one is wrong, both may be right. It may just be the interpretations that are different. For this reason, communication at the level of *samsāra* is very uncertain. On the other hand, very few people have the faculty of communication at a very high level. It's very rare. The language of the *citta* is where two people can communicate and know exactly what the meaning is.

Even when they are using speech they know because the spoken words react inside.

We have to realize that the world is a very mysterious place. It isn't quite what we think it is. People nowadays think we know all about it because of what science tells us, but science is all on the other side of the "black box". So we don't really know much. People assume the world exists in a certain manner because they learn what effect comes from causes. They see something happening here, and they see the results here. Having worked out a theory to explain why that is, they then predict that if you do this you should get that. They find it works like that. Finding that, they feel confident that their theory is correct, but it isn't necessarily correct. All they know is that using that theory they can get certain results from those causes. They then go on to evolve that theory by trying different things. They have to modify it gradually, making it more and more useful and correct, until eventually they get a very powerful thing that can tell us which results come from which causes. Because it seems so effective, people feel that it must be correct.

In fact it's only correct because of the method that was developed. It's a case of the survival of the fittest. Looking at survival of the fittest in terms of life, many interpretations can be put on it. Many branches of life can be analyzed using that same method. So why shouldn't the same thing happen in scientific theory. Why shouldn't there be any number of possible interpretations? It happens that a scientific theory has gone along a certain line because some people got the idea it worked in that way. Later they modified it to cover other instances. Then somebody else got the idea that it worked in other ways as well, until it gradually evolved into a very effective theory. Even then, nobody actually knows the truth of science. All we know is that science seems to work in its own sphere.

One of the fundamental assumptions in science is that the senses tell us real things, that our senses give us a true representation of what's there. But even that is very difficult to discuss because when you try to work out what is a "true representation", you find there is no way to define it at all. The whole thing is entirely up in the air. The exceptions to the "rule" are always explained away. When something doesn't fit, science says there is something wrong with the experiment.

Science has discovered that certain outcomes take place because of expectations. They found rats performed in mazes based on the scientist's expectations. This is very obvious in the life sciences, but it's also true to some extent in other areas. Self-fulfilling prophecies are quite well known now.

It's interesting to see the way the world works, how things are affected by the way people think. The most obvious example nowadays is in economics. It requires such a little thing to make the markets to go up or down. The slightest thing can change them. So much of that comes from the way people are thinking, and nothing else. When we look at money, the whole of money it's a mental thing. What is money, a pound note or whatever? It's just a piece of paper, nothing else. It has value only because people give it value. We can use it only because everybody accepts that value. But value itself is a mental thing, it has no substance. So the confidence people have in money is really a mental thing. If that confidence goes, it is worthless.

People drive themselves mad over money. In the 1930's there was one man in America who had three million dollars and lost two million. So he committed suicide, even though he had one million left. How crazy! By looking at the world, we can learn a lot about the ways of people and the views that they have, and the paucity of it all.

The value of giving donations is to break your attachment to things such as money, so you don't feel so attached to it. The less you feel attached to it, the less you are influenced by it. It's a good thing. The trouble nowadays is that everything has become economic. In the world nowadays money and making money are the things that have value. Money is now more valuable than people. People don't matter now. But when people no longer matter, money goes sour also.

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The Question of Rebirth

Nowadays people don't have the same restraints they had in the past. In the past, people were up against the restraints of nature. Nowadays, they manage to circumvent nature in so many ways. In the past, it was a job to travel anywhere. It wasn't easy. You might have to buy an elephant to start with. Then you had to learn how to drive the thing. Nowadays you just sit in a bus or car and go wherever you want, easily. The same is true of traveling to other countries. People can now go enormous distances so easily; whereas before it was hard work, very hard work. After the war I went to India. It took sixteen days to get from England to Bombay. And that was relatively quick in those days. My father was living in India working as a mining engineer in a gold mine. I went out for family reasons.

When I came to Thailand in 1955 I was already a novice. I was first ordained as a novice in London by a Sinhalese monk. I wasn't interested in going to Sri Lanka because I knew there wasn't much meditation being practiced there. If it had been open, I might have gone to Burma. But due to the political situation there, I knew it was hopeless trying to go to Burma. I had heard that things were quite good in Thailand as far as the Sangha goes, so I decided to go there. I was quite fortunate, since previously I hadn't thought much about Thailand. Burma I had thought about because the British had been there.

I remember that in the days when I was young society was much more restrained. The people in England had a much better view of morality. Most ordinary people had a good idea of what was evil and what wasn't. They'd say it was a sin to tell lies, for instance. Nowadays it's all gone, very few people care about moral issues. They've got little idea of what morality means. That's all gone, which to me is a very clear indication that things are heading the wrong way. Everybody claims that the last generation was much better than the present one, and of course that's the case if society is going downhill. The further you go, the lower you get. This is the way it is going at the moment.

It was around 1960, I suppose, that attitudes changed. In England, it probably started with the Beatles. I'm not blaming them, but that's about

when it started. Since then people's whole attitude has changed. At one time they had faith in their religion, mainly Christianity. After about 1960 everyone decided that religion was out-of-date, so religious attitudes were out-of-fashion.

Whatever the causes were, social norms got worse. My own feeling is that what happened is a question of rebirth. People rarely consider rebirth and what it means. Take England, for example. England had a large empire at one time, so it had connection with a very large number of countries. Because of those connections, we can expect that many of the people from those countries may be reborn in England. England is now populated by people with attitudes from all over the world. This is one sort of change that has taken place. And it's largely a matter of rebirth.

People are being reborn into an environment that suits them. That environment is one that has to some extent deteriorated. They then adopt the wrong attitude from that environment, because this is what they've been use to in their previous lives. I think it's a matter of rebirth. The implications of rebirth are not stated very clearly in the *suttas*. People are reborn in a situation suitable to their *kamma*; so when we look at the situations in the world, we can predict what sort of people will be reborn there. This gives us an idea of what's likely to happen in the future.

In Thailand at the moment there are various groups. Some very good people are reborn here because of Buddhism. We also find a large number of not-so-good people because, though there is Buddhism, much of it is corrupt, it has deteriorated. Then we find a large number of people reborn here that are not very good at all — the working class and a lot of politicians.

Individuals within a group will vary. All we can say is that the average of the type of individual born into an environment will be the average for that type of environment. Individuals, of course, may be different. We all know that there are some people born into a very low environment who manage to become very good people. Others who are born into a very good environment are awful. It can go both ways. What can happen is that somebody who has made merit in the past, perhaps by offering donations of money, is reborn into a situation where he receives a lot of money. But, because he was generous, doesn't mean his morality was necessarily very

good in the past. It's true that the being born into a rich environment is the result of merit, but if the moral side of the person is not good, it may be very damaging.

Ajaan Mahā Boowa has said we must strive to attain Anāgāmi, because if we don't attain at least that level we can expect to continue experiencing a lot of *dukkha* in future lives. This is especially true of those following the Buddhist path because when they are reborn the moral principles that they have developed will probably run contrary to a lot of what they meet in the next life. They will be able to see clearly what's happening in many places where they can do nothing. They will know things are wrong. But they will also know that they cannot speak about them because others will just shout them down. A person like that has a lot of *dukkha* in life, and probably a lot of difficulty. If they have enough wisdom they will manage to steer their way through, but it's hard going. A good person who has done the practice and become fairly free inside is quite likely to experience a lot of *dukkha* when he comes back again. At the same time, he is far better off than someone who is always blind. At least the moral person has a clear direction.

Why do they get the dukkha?

It's because their own personal situation is so contrary to the social situation they've been thrown into. Can you imagine knowing what you know and having to go live with a lot of rough Australians in the outback? You'd see those people as being very gross. But you can only talk to them on their own level. Try to tell them anything higher and they won't listen, they're not interested. One is always up against that sort of *dukkha*.

If you see a lot of people with poor sīla making a lot of merit, that can predict the future, can't it?

It's quite true that one experiences the results of that merit that one has made. But if one's good results are mixed up with the results of one's bad *kamma*, that can cause one's life to turn in the wrong direction. I am reminded of the TB in my foot. It is obviously the result of bad *kamma*, but it saved me from serving the Second World War. That's the reverse aspect of it. Though it was the result of bad *kamma*, it saved me from a lot of trouble, I know that.

It seems that whenever a true religion appears, a false one also appears. If a very profound religion appears, there will be black magic as well. The opposite comes up because the world is made of opposites. These are general principles that are worth seeing to enable one to get some idea of one's own position. As to one's own specific practice, that's another matter.

The practice of *samādhi* is extremely valuable because that wakes one up and sharpens the mind. The practice of *samādhi* is the one that concentrates the mind, pulls it together. *Paññā* then uses the *samādhi*. You must develop that basis first; otherwise the mind is constantly distracted. It has no strength. It's like a water nozzle that is spraying water out everywhere; the water has no power behind it. When you focus it into one jet, it becomes quite strong. The mind is like that. You need to bring the mind into a very focused state. When focused well, the mind can be used to investigate things, because the mind can be kept on a meditation subject without being distracted all the time. That brings up wisdom; that's the point where wisdom comes up.

Samādhi alone will bring you a very clear mind. If you don't develop wisdom as far as the path goes, you will probably gain wisdom in the world. It will give you a worldly wisdom, but that's not really the right path. Many people in the world have a lot of wisdom that comes naturally from their *kamma*. Some people instinctively know the right way to behave, the right things to say, the right way to approach people. These are all factors of wisdom. You can see the advantages of it when you meet a person that doesn't have any wisdom. They're plenty of people who don't know how to do or say the right thing, as though they have two left feet. A person can develop *samādhi* and still be rather stupid if they haven't developed the wisdom side. A lot of the village people are like that. They can develop *samādhi* easily but they can't so easily develop wisdom. Wisdom is very difficult to develop for a person who lacks it. If they have a teacher that points out what they should do and shows the way to develop wisdom, then they can do it with the help of *samādhi*.

Is faith in the teacher important?

If the teacher is the right teacher and a good teacher then, yes. You must be sure it's the right teacher. In Thailand, there are many teachers whom

people believe in. Some of them are not so good. There two ways to know whether a teacher is good or not. If you get the right results from his teaching, then you know you have a good teacher. The other way is to work it out for yourself.

We have the Dhamma, the Buddha's teaching. We should work on it, get to know it, think about it, and understand it where we can. This is known as *sutamāya paññā*, the wisdom developed by learning. It turns into *chintamāya paññā*, the wisdom developed by thinking about the Dhamma. We think about the teaching and come to know it. We understand the ins and outs of it. We also learn from other people what their experiences are. Then we begin to see the way that *samādhi* and *paññā* work; not only in ourselves, but in other people as well. All this is the basis for *bhāvanāmāya paññā*. When the *samādhi* develops, *bhāvanāmāya paññā* will come up very easily, because *samādhi* and wisdom are a pair in which *paññā* is the main teacher. It's the surest guide. Wisdom is a very valuable faculty. A good teacher is also very valuable. A good teacher can show us many shortcuts and point out things that we haven't seen before. When he points them out, we realize: "I see what that means now", when previously we hadn't. So we gain more quickly in meditation.

Can one deceive oneself without a teacher?

If you don't have enough wisdom, you can deceive yourself. But if you have wisdom in the way of Dhamma, you won't easily deceive yourself because you will also have doubt. There are two types of doubts. There is the right type and the wrong type. The right type of doubt is the type that makes you check to be sure about things you're not certain about. The wrong type of doubt is the type where you disbelieve something even though you have all the evidence to prove it. The wrong type of doubt is just a rank disbelief — a skepticism where you refuse to believe. Even though everything fits together, you still can't believe it. Some people are like that where rebirth is concerned. They just refuse to believe it. They get all the evidence, and they hear all the stories about other people who can remember their past lives, but they refuse to believe it. This is *vicikiccā*, the wrong type of doubt.

The right type of doubt is when you question all of your experiences. You have some experience in meditation and you don't know if it was *samādhi* or

jhāna or path moment. So instead of jumping to conclusions, you question the nature of that experience. On things like that you must have doubt. If you are not doubtful, you can go wrong very easily. It is because of lack of doubt that people suddenly believe they've attained Arahant. They have an experience in *samādhi* which leads them to believe they've become Arahant. This happens because they don't have any doubt. They suddenly come across an experience and think: "Oh I've done it!" But that's just the *kilesas* coming up. The *kilesas* make the person believe something false. He gets the wrong view that he's enlightened and thinks: "I don't have to do any more work in meditation." If a person really believes that, he's finished. He can't go any further. It's a big blockage. The thing that's important is to know the experience clearly for yourself – that's what matters.

One bhikkhu who lived here thought he had attained enlightenment. Ajaan Mahā Boowa said to him: "Alright, you've attained that type of Arahant. Now you have to go on to attain the other type of Arahant". He knew there was no point telling him that he was wrong, so he didn't. So he agreed with him about attaining Arahant, but told him to go on and do something further. Ajaan Mahā Boowa is very clever. So if you have a friend who's enlightened, just leave it at that. That's their experience. It's your own experience that is important. Whether other people attain enlightened or not is their business, not yours. Those who do attain Arahantship don't tell other people about it. Why should they?

To give an example of what this means: Ajaan Mahā Boowa says of some of the other Ajaans "Yes, I know he's done it, he's got there. I managed to talk to him." When he talks to them he wants to know about their meditation practice from the beginning right up to the present. Ajaan Mahā Boowa says that if he does that, he knows whether that person has attained or not. With people he hasn't spoken to he says he's not sure. Even if everybody else says that a person is Arahant, Ajaan Mahā Boowa doesn't say that unless he's checked. He says maybe, but he's not sure. To know who has actually attained Arahant is very difficult. Even with someone like Ajaan Fun, Ajaan Mahā Boowa says that he thinks he did attain but that he never had a chance to talk to him. He says he thinks he really did but he's only 95 percent sure because he never had a chance to talk to him. Paradoxically, it's very easy to tell who is *not* an Arahant, but it's difficult to say who is. It may take an Arahant to know who is an Arahant because to distinguish between

Arahant and Anāgāmi must be very difficult. In any case, knowing whether someone is an Arahant or not doesn't solve your problems. You have your own problems, your own *kilesas* and your own meditation practice to do. You must deal with that. You shouldn't compare yourself to other people. It's rather like comparing chalk with cheese — they may appear alike on the outside, but on the inside they're entirely different.

When you experience something externally you may think that that's the *citta*. But it's not. The *citta* is the one who knows that, the one who sees it. The *citta* is the "one who knows".

The *citta* is not something that you can know like an object. The *citta* is the one who knows all the objects. It's always the one inside who knows. Because of that, you can't look directly at the *citta*. You can know the *citta* only in the past — what the *citta* was. You can see now that previously your *citta* was a bit confused or greedy or whatever. You can see that. But you can't know the *citta* at the present moment in the same way. You can experience the *citta* only by being the *citta*. But because the *citta* is so subtle, that is very difficult.

You can know the *citta*, but you can't see it. It's not a sensory thing that you can know in that way. It doesn't resemble an external object. You can't know it in that way because the *citta* is the one who knows the objects. For the *citta* to know itself, it would have to split itself into two. It can't do that.

From what I've heard the *citta* of the *Arahant* is perfectly still inside. It's not impermanent. It's unaffected by all the things that affect our *cittas*. The *citta* of the *Arahant* has no *dukkha*, no feeling. Feeling is external. How could it experience feeling, because feelings are changing. Ajaan Mahā Boowa says the *citta* of the ordinary person is kicked around like a football.

One woman couldn't get her *citta* properly focused so she lit a candle and brought the flame inside. That was her skillful method, and it worked. We all have to find our own skillful methods. Each person must find his own method. There are many techniques that people have used. There was one *bhikkhu* who used to fall asleep every time he practiced *samādhi*. So he took a board and placed it across the top of a well. Then he sat on it. Once or twice he went asleep and began to fall. So he quickly grabbed the side of the well

and climbed back on the board. That was his method, and it worked. Some *bhikkhus* sit on the edge of a cliff. If they go to sleep they know they're likely to fall off.

There are all sorts of things you can do. For example, sometimes a bit of light may help. Try lighting a candle. Or you can try changing postures by standing or kneeling. You can try many different things. If you feel tired, activity is probably the best cure, so try walking. Try to find the point of tiredness in your body. You'll probably find that there is one point within your body where the feeling of tiredness is coming from. If you search, you'll be able to find an actual physical point. Get to know that point. Quite likely it will be in the solar plexus. When you find that point, try focusing on the breath there, on the movement of the abdomen. The solar plexus is said to be the center of the world, of the four elements.

The important point is to keep trying. Try to clearly define the feeling and situation you're in, that might help. It's no good trying to find the reasons for the tiredness. Just continue on with the practice. If you can get through that tiredness and defeat it, you'll probably come to some very good results. But be ready, because the *kilesas* won't like it. Tightening up is the work of the *kilesas*. They are trying to stop you. By letting go and going into that point, you will probably defeat the *kilesas*. Watch the *kilesas* and get to know them; and try to stay relaxed as much as you can. If you continue on, the right conditions will probably arise; but it may take some time. The feeling is a result of *kamma*.

People are a very strange mixture. The Buddha said that the arising and ceasing of the whole world can be seen in the body. Why is the body in this shape? It could be said that it is probably mirror of the shape of the *citta* at the level of human being. It's not the whole *citta*, but rather its level as a human being. The variations in the body from person to person are caused by *kamma*, probably *kamma* that was made at the human level.

Take a bandit, for example. A bandit is a human being so he has come to birth because of good *kamma*, despite the fact that he's a bandit. If he's a successful bandit, he must have some good *kamma* because you can't be a successful bandit without that. What he will be rewarded with in the future is another matter. Such a person has both good and bad in him. Even though

he's a bandit, there will be some good in him as well which a good Ajaan can influence. The Ajaan might realize that he had some link to that person in the past.

We've all done a great variety of *kamma*, the results of which can come back to us at any time. When someone who has done good deeds in the past meets the right conditions, that will trigger off the arising of the results of that *kamma*. The fact someone is a bandit means he isn't meeting the right conditions for certain good *kamma* to arise, so the results of that *kamma* won't come up. Because of that, one can never be sure if a person is a good person or a bad person. In the world, we have worldly methods of showing it; but what is actually within that person, we just don't know. We don't know what their past was.

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Factors of the Path

My son experienced something crawling up his back and onto his head. What is that called?

It's called *pīti*. There are five types or degrees of *pīti* described in the *Visuddhimagga*. This is one type of *pīti*. Others include seeing images that look like cloth or clouds, or feeling that ants are crawling all over you. Another is the feeling you're in a boat on a rough sea, going up and down all over the place. There are a lot of different experiences of this sort. The final *pīti* is what you might call enthusiasm for the practice, enthusiasm for Dhamma. This one really matters. I'd have to read up on them to know which one this is. I don't get many of these *pīti* myself. After *pīti* comes one and dies away, you should experience *sukha*, a feeling of happiness or joy. Does he get that?

When it happened to my son it he almost quit sitting. It made him want to stop sitting.

That was probably because he didn't know what it was. *Pīti* is a normal thing. Tell him it's not abnormal. It will probably go on for some time and then die away. There are all sorts of *pīti* that can happen. They are all in the nature of *samādhi* experiences. Feeling the body as being very, very tall or as being a lump of rock are also *pīti* experiences.

One lady talked about not being able to stop her hand from moving during practice. Ajaan said it was alright.

Think about the Sufis, who whirl round and round. It could certainly focus one's mind because when you're whirling around you can't think of much other than what you're doing. The mind is held in that. People have worked out all sorts of tricks through the ages. They're all in the nature of *samādhi*. They're *samādhi* experiences. The way of wisdom is quite different. Wisdom is much more like a scientific investigation — but done internally, not externally. The wisdom tends to pull everything together, it wants to know everything. It asks of whatever comes up: Why? What is this? How does it work? What's happening here? It wants to know all the time. If you question

everything like that when you are trying to practice *samādhi*, the *samādhi* goes flat. When you are practicing for *samādhi* and your *citta* is still not strong enough, you shouldn't try to develop the wisdom. You should not let it come up. It will disturb things too much. When practicing for wisdom, you shouldn't bother about *samādhi* because that will make you want to go into calm, which won't allow you investigate properly. When skill comes in both of them, then you can bring them together. That's very important. It's a very powerful combination.

The way of *samādhi* is learning to stop thought, to hold it still. Thinking is the thing that prevents us from becoming calm. When we can stop our thoughts and hold them still, then the results of the *samādhi* will come automatically. *Samādhi* is quite a natural state. When we stop the restlessness of the mind and keep it still, it will either go into sleep or into *samādhi*. If we prevent it from going to sleep, it will then go into *samādhi*. It's natural. It's not something strange. Were it something strange, I don't think the Buddha would have taught it. In fact, it is something quite natural for people. If we learn to stay clear of the *kilesas* and what they bring up — the thoughts and restlessness — it will come of its own accord.

How do you avoid going to sleep in meditation?

The main thing is mindfulness. Mindfulness is the key. On those occasions when you feel you want to go inside — for example, listening to a talk on Dhamma — then there will be a feeling as if something inside is pulling you down. When that happens, you shouldn't resist it. You should let it go down inside, but keep your mindfulness aware all the time. This is calm. Some people say to Ajaan Mahā Boowa: “When I listen to you speak, my mind wants to go to sleep all the time and I can't hear what you are saying.” Ajaan Mahā Boowa says to them: “You want calm, but when you start going toward calm you immediately break it up.” When you find something pulling you down into the heart, let it go there. This is going into calm. It's calm in the way of *samādhi*. You don't want to talk. You don't want to see anything. You just want to go down inside. The inward pull of *samādhi* is like that.

An old man from the village died of cancer a few years back. Dr. Udom said he could perform an operation to save his life. But the old man said: “Never mind, let it be. It's just nature taking its course.” He died of it. He wasn't

prepared to have it operated on. He used to come here on the monk days. After Ajaan Mahā Boowa had given the talk in the morning, he'd go down under the *sala* and sit there. He'd go into a deep state of calm and wouldn't move all day. When someone talked to him, he wouldn't answer. When the time came to go home, they just picked him up, put him in a cart and took him back. The next day he was alright.

There was another old village man. He was a very thin old man. He used to come around cutting the forest back, practically every day. He came with something like a pair of scissors to cut things back. He worked slowly but kept working the whole time. When that old man died, Ajaan Mahā Boowa had several of the Ajaans come to his funeral. I never knew quite why, but he must have got somewhere in his practice. It was a good sign.

There was one old woman, I don't know what happened to her, she must have died by now. When I first came here, she came to the monastery quite frequently. She was funny. No matter what Ajaan Mahā Boowa said to her, she was completely indifferent. She showed no movement, no worry in the least. Once Ajaan Mahā Boowa was talking about a wat and a nearby chedi up on the hill, and he said to her: "You've seen it, haven't you?" She said: "No, I haven't seen it at all." Ajaan Mahā Boowa said; "But it's right up on the hill there, you must have seen it." "No, I have never seen it." Ajaan Mahā Boowa said "Crazy!" After about five minutes the lady said: "Oh! Do you mean that one up on the hill". Then Ajaan Mahā Boowa said: "See! What did I tell you!" That woman was very funny. It didn't worry her in the least.

Many of the old people are very good, but they're not coming to the wat like they used to. Often worldly concerns grab them and pull them away. Their interests go in the way of the world. Everything is against them. They've got television, newspapers, radio and mass communications. There is nothing left that resembles the natural jungle environment they used to live in.

They have televisions in the village?

They have them everywhere. They even have them on buffaloes! If people have electricity, they have television. I haven't seen any "dishes" yet. I don't know if they have access to global television yet or not.

Much of it is bought on installments. They buy motorbikes on the “never, never” principle. Do you know what that is? You pay installments. Even if you won a large sum of money in the lottery, you couldn’t pay off the bike because it’s in the contract that you must pay installments. So they end up paying twice the marked price. The problem is, village people don’t understand these things. I feel sorry for them. Ajaan Mahā Boowa has tried help them by warning tell them, but it’s no use.

This morning I was reading Maurice Walsh’s introduction to the *Dīgha Nikāya*. He writes very well. He made one interesting point about the Eight-fold Path. He said the Path is divided into three parts: *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā* – but the order is different. He surmised that there must be *paññā* first before there can be *sīla* and *samādhi*. To some extent this is true, but the real meaning of the Path doesn’t seem to be that at all. The real meaning of the Path would seem to be that the Path can only arise when all those factors are brought to a sufficient level to bring about the Path Moment. It becomes a true Path only at the Path Moment, which is the experience of either *Sotāpanna*, *Sakadāgāmī*, *Anāgāmī* or *Arahant*. This is a path that proceeds from a lower state to a higher one. It is just a very simple moment and that’s all. Up to that moment, it’s only preparation for the Path.

Magga-sāmaggī is the condition where all the path factors come together to become a path. All of them must be present. It’s not as though you practice *sīla*, then *samādhi*, then *paññā*. Nor is it a process that happens over a long, long time. One can force that meaning onto it, but it doesn’t necessarily mean that. When you look in the *Dīgha Nikāya* you’ll find that when the Buddha taught King Ajātasattu in the *Sāmaññaphala Sutta*, he began with *dāna* and then went to *sīla* and so on and up and up and finally he came to the Four Noble Truths. In other words, the Four Noble Truths came right at the end. After going through the Four Noble Truths, Buddha told the king, who was very moved by what he heard, that if he hadn’t killed his father he would have seen the Path. This suggests that the Path couldn’t form at the point because the *sīla* factor was lacking. It’s interesting that the Buddha always seemed to go to the Four Noble Truths at the end of a talk, never at the beginning. We can describe the individual factors of the path separately or we can review the Four Noble Truths and describe how they are connected, but the Path itself really occurs when the full development of

each of four truths is attained. Essentially, we are practicing for the Path, training ourselves for the Path. When the time comes that the path factors are strong enough, they will all coalesce and result in the path moment.

Is it the same for the dasa pāramī, the ten perfections?

With the Path, the question is: Must all the path factors be at 100 per cent strength for the Path Moment to arise, or does it depend on the strength of the path factors that are sufficient for a certain individual? Personally I think the strength of the path factors is an individual thing, dependent on what a person needs. What is needed for sufficiency by a person may be very strong on one factor and weak on another. What is needed is sufficient overall strength in them all; for example, when wisdom is strong, you don't need so much *samādhi*, but *samādhi* is necessary. With the other path factors present, the *samādhi* will probably be Right *Samādhi* because it said somewhere in the *suttas* that each factor of the path is a condition for the one that is higher than it. They are the conditioning factors. *Sammādiṭṭhi* is a condition for *Sammāsankappa*, and *Sammāsankappa* is a condition for *Sammāvāca*, and so on with action, and livelihood. Each factor is a condition for the next one. I think the factors of the path are also closely related to the *samyojanas*, the hindrances to the path. At the level of the Sotāpanna the three lower hindrances are overcome. Then greed and hate are overcome. Then it goes on to the higher factors. I think they are all linked into the factors of the path somehow.

I am not sure what the reasoning behind the difference between Sotāpanna and Sakadāgāmī is. There must be a reason behind it. Why does the Sakadāgāmī reduce greed and hate? It must have something to do with understanding; one understands something very clearly.

It's always the cutting of the *kilesas*. One finds in the Dhamma that all these things are interlinked. The path must have a link with the four stages. You'll find the other factors in Buddhist theory are all interrelated. Like the various levels of existence: you'll find they are all linked up with the various levels of the consciousness that are possible. Consciousness has many levels which are all linked up with the many levels of existence. The whole lot fits together. If it doesn't fit together, there must be something wrong. Seeing these relationships can give you a real sense of confidence in Buddhism.

There may be things that you haven't really understood which you suddenly see a connection between, making you understand how they fit together — like a gearbox, they're the right shapes and sizes so they all slide in and out together.

Ajaan Mahā Boowa talks about planting a tree. When you plant a tree you can't make it grow faster than it naturally will. All you can do is give it the right conditions, then it grows at its own rate. It's the same with our development in Dhamma. You can continue to do what's necessary in the practice to develop in the Dhamma, and it will grow, but at its own rate. Some people grow faster and some slower.

Please talk about the gross path and the subtle path.

There are different levels of the Path; differences of character. Going into training is rather like building a house. You first cut down a tree, then you cut off the branches and take off the bark. That's the sort of coarse work. Then you've got to get the trunk roughly shaped up and sawed into boards. After that, you have to smooth them with plane and polish them. Similarly, the path of training becomes more and more subtle as you go on. When someone has rough characteristics, like some of those farmers' kids, the teacher must first of all shout at them and scold them to hold their attention. But later on, when they become more subtle, he has to do that less and less. He can teach them in subtler ways. With some people, all he has to do is make suggestions. To others he doesn't have to say anything special; he merely gives a general talk on Dhamma and they pick up the meaning. It depends very much on the person and his level of consciousness at the time, because those levels are always changing.

I remember one *bhikkhu* who used to do the duties at Ajaan Mahā Boowa's *kuti*. Ajaan Mahā Boowa yelled at him every day. He was really obtuse. In the end Ajaan Mahā Boowa told him: "Go, go, go away! I can't do anything with you!"

Some people say that you should be happy if Ajaan Mahā Boowa is still scolding you, it's better than if he stopped talking to you.

They say that being scolded by Ajaan Mahā Boowa is far superior to being praised by an ordinary person. That's right, because the Ajaan is dealing with what's there. What is there is a false thing because it isn't one's true nature. If he's scolding you, that's a helpful thing. An ordinary person's praise will probably just increase your conceit. You must realize that being scolded by an Ajaan often brings you great value. This is a method that some of the Ajaans use.

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Focusing Inward

When something like emotions come up, you have to use wisdom. You must investigate them. If you examine them properly you'll see what they are.

What way could I investigate them?

It depends on what kind of an emotion it is. If it's despair, then you can investigate it in terms of time. For example, you can reflect that despair, like everything else, is impermanent, so it's going to change and go away. The despair won't last. That's one way to see it. You can investigate it in terms of: "What is despair?" If you experience a state of despair, then you should be able to say what despair is. You know it. Because you know it you should be able to define it. So you must question it to find out its nature. Is it feeling? Is it thought, or memory? What is it? If it's any of those, you'll want to know what type of feeling, thought or memory it is. You see the way it works, so you understand what's happening. You see what keeps you in that state. Feeling is going to be very important. Obviously it's *dukkha*, but you must define it more precisely to see what type it actually is. When you see what the feelings are then you can deal with them.

There are all sorts of emotional states. Basically, they come under the headings of greed, hatred and delusion, which are all forms of *kilesas*. They're all tricks that the *kilesas* use to prevent us from developing in *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā*. The emotions form habitual modes of thought and habitual ways of doing things inside ourselves. Because the emotions tend to arise in habitual ways, the *kilesas* pick on those tendencies to protect themselves when we are doing the practice. The *kilesas* always try to protect and guard themselves in that way. They'll bring up any of those emotional states to try to prevent the practice from going forward. You must recognize that and overcome it. This is generally the way to go forward in the practice. People experience different emotional affects. In some people it's almost a bodily thing. They experience back pains and they can't stop thinking about that, which can be quite a hindrance for some people. People easily become concerned, thinking: "What's this? Is it a disease? Cancer or something like that?" It's extraordinary what the *kilesas* can bring to mind. They bring up all

sorts of speculation. They're full of deceptive tricks. You've have to learn about them for yourself.

The odd thing about *dukkha* is: we know it perfectly well; but when we look at it, we can't find anything there. We can't really even define what it is. That's because it's feeling. When you try to tell another person what feeling you've got, there is no way to do it. The only thing you can do is to tell them something that they can refer to in themselves. You may say you have a "sharp" pain. What does a sharp pain mean? You have to expect the other person to refer the word "sharp" to something in their own experience. That person checks his own experience to try to understand what you mean by it. Strictly speaking though, words and concepts don't really define the pain at all. But there is no way of relating how you feel to another person, except in terms of their own experience. Because of that, it's very difficult for us to define feelings and to say what they are. We can only define them by knowing them as they arise. You must pay careful attention to the nature of the feeling and know it as just that. Try and define it to yourself as far as you can.

Should one try to put a word on it?

It doesn't matter. If you like to you can, but you don't need to. If it's a distinct pain, like a muscular pain, then you often can define it quite clearly. But when you have a thick head and a cold, it's not very easy.

Am I making a wrong distinction between inside and outside, being in meditation vs. dealing with people?

No, it's not a wrong distinction; it's a convenient distinction, that's all. Strictly speaking, making a distinction between outside and inside is the wrong way to look at it. It's nearly all inside. But then if everything is inside, then there can be no outside. Because of that, the distinction between them tends to break down — but that's at a higher level. At first, you must look to see what's outside and what's inside. Outside means outside the body and inside means inside the body. That's where you must consider it to begin with. Later you begin to question whether things really exist outside at all.

The way of Dhamma takes you steadily more and more inward. In body contemplation, you look at the skin on another person and then at your own skin and realize that both are of the same nature. So you take an external observation and bring it inward. You may see a bone while you're eating some chicken and it occurs to you that you've got a bone like that as well. Again, that's bringing an external object inside yourself for investigation. This is one way of examining things. If you're skilled at *samādhi* meditation, looking inward can be done either from what one thinks of as the level of the eye or from that inner place where one knows. It can occur either way. It depends on the *citta* of the person. If you tell two people to focus on the heart and look at it, each will do it in a different way. Each finds out how to do it in their own way; and for that person it is probably the right way. Each person will do it in their own natural way. Some people may go out here and look back. Another person may go down and look from that position. Another person looks from up here downward. Another may go to the back and look forward. There are all sorts of ways of doing this.

Do you mean to go inside and look from the inside to the outside?

Look inside to something that is inside. It varies with each person and each person has to do what they understand is the right way of doing it, because there isn't one standard way.

If you focus outwardly to contemplate something external — a person, an animal, a situation, a dead body, something loathsome — you first think of it externally. Then you apply that to yourself by seeing the similarity between that and your own body. That brings it home. If you're focusing inwardly in the body contemplation, you focus on the internal body parts like the bones, the kidney, the heart, the liver, the lungs and so on. All these are internal objects that you investigate by focusing inward.

When one deals with people and doesn't want to break the meditation...

Mindfulness is the thing that is important there. If you are mindful, you won't forget yourself. Not forgetting yourself means that you talk to the person from inside yourself, from your own position. You don't forget yourself and put all your attention out there.

It's like if you think of a person in England until you forget you're in here in Thailand. You think of them so much that your attention wanders. That's wrong, because there is no mindfulness present. When mindfulness is present, you can think about something without forgetting yourself and where you are at the moment. You know perfectly well that you're thinking about it from this present moment. Mindfulness is so important. When you develop mindfulness, the problems that come up in practice will usually sort themselves out in a way that you can deal with them. Unfortunately, mindfulness is usually lacking. Mindfulness keeps you inside, and you know yourself much better than anything else. Truly speaking, we don't know other people, we just know ourselves. What we do know of other people is usually in reference to ourselves. We know how we do things, and we assume that other people do things in the same way. That's the nature of our understanding. We can know ourselves and how our minds work by being mindful.

It seems my practice has improved since I have been practicing mindfulness in everything I do.

That happens with mindfulness, but you should realize that this is still not the real mindfulness. This is the training for mindfulness. The real mindfulness is what Ajaan Mahā Boowa calls *mahā-sati*. That's when the mindfulness is in the heart. It like someone who's guarding a bank. If the guard is outside the bank watching people, he's got be running around the whole time to see people and know who's coming in. When he stands in front of the door of the vault where the valuables are, then he knows who comes and goes there all the time. He doesn't need to go outside at all. This is *mahā-sati*. It's in the *citta*; and because it's in the *citta*, it knows whatever enters the *citta*. It knows everything that goes in. When it's like that, you are aware of everything. Nothing can escape your attention.

But you must train to reach that level. In training, you must practice mindfulness in the best way you can by keeping your attention in the present. Always be aware of what you are doing and never let your mind wander off on its own. Mindful awareness is one of the most difficult practices, and one of the most beneficial too. The thing that makes it difficult is the *kilesas*, of course; if it wasn't for them, mindfulness would be easy. The *kilesas* make things difficult. Because of that, you should get to

know them. They're the enemy. You must search them out and see them inside yourself so as to know what they are. Everybody has more or less the same *kilesas*, but they come up in different ways in different people. Each person is an individual. Each person must learn about their own *kilesas*.

Once you know something of your kilesas, can you get inside and prevent them from arising?

You can't. You can't actually prevent them like that. If you know them, when they come up you can be aware of them and not react to them. They come up with a certain feeling, so you know that feeling is the condition for that particular type of *kilesa* to arise. You then learn that a certain feeling gives rise to certain *kilesas*. When that feeling comes up, you know that certain *kilesas* are likely to come up. So keep a watch out. Keep the mindfulness strong. If you watch that process, the *kilesas* don't get a foothold. They can't do anything. In the *paṭiccasamupāda*, feeling (*vedanā*) is the condition for the arising of *taṇhā*. *Taṇhā* is the *kilesas*; but feeling is the important thing to watch. Feeling itself is just the result of past *kamma*. But when that feeling arises, you know that certain *kilesas* can arise with it. If it's a pleasant feeling, greed will often arise, if it's an unpleasant feeling, hate will arise. In either case, you learn which feelings give rise to which *kilesas*. Once you see the connection you can deal with them. Mostly people get caught unaware.

How does one meditate when one is getting old?

I too have to ask myself that question. For those who have some control of *samādhi*, even just a little, the important thing is to investigate with wisdom. If you tend to be sleepy, that's even more reason to do it. Investigate the body. Go through the parts: hair of the head, hair of the body, nails, teeth, skin, bones and so on, the 32 parts. Fix on one part, like hair of the head, and focus on it in your mind. Don't stay on it long, just focus on it until you are aware of it, then go to the hair of the body, then to nails, then skin and so on — just enough to focus your attention on it.

Go through all thirty two parts, becoming briefly aware of each one. Then go back through them again. If one of the parts suddenly becomes interesting and grabs your attention, stay focused on that part while the interest is there.

The advantage of going through the parts is that it gives you a regular method of investigating. That can tend to overcome some of the sleepiness. If you don't know the thirty-two parts, there are plenty of books that have them listed. Pick one part and bring that to attention clearly, then the next part, and the next. This will prevent the sleepiness getting hold. If you can do this, it will help to brighten up the mind and overcome sleepiness. Also, physical activity, like walking meditation, is better than sitting all the time. When you walk you can't sleep.

Some *bhikkhus* sit on the edge of a cliff to overcome of sleepiness. They know they've got to pay attention. There are many methods one can work out to overcome sleepiness.

Of course, we tend to feel sleepier and a bit more tired when we get older. Its normal, but we must try to do something to overcome that. But one has to be cautious with the ordinary methods of *samādhi* because they can lead one to sleep.

Is that bhavanga-citta?

Sometimes....sometimes it's just sleep. You might easily fall asleep because of a lack of mindfulness. When nothing is controlling the *citta*, it just drifts. The control the young person has of the mind is not there any longer; it's not so strong as you get older. Because of that, the mind drifts and picks up things from the past. So thoughts come up that are not especially good or bad. They're rather weak thoughts, which is a way of drifting to sleep.

When it gets dark, my mind wants to sleep.

People are full of habits, and habits are not easy to overcome. Having built up a particular habit and it's difficult to change. If you build up a habit of going to sleep when it gets dark, that will tend to happen. If you build up a habit of going to sleep at midnight, that will tend to happen, so you won't be able to sleep before midnight. You can use good habits to help in your practice. You can build up habit of doing meditation practice at a particular time. That's an important advantage. When you have particular times for meditation practice then you tend to automatically go into that mode when you sit down at that time. It makes the meditation that much easier.

I remember hearing Ajaan Singtong say that when you walk, don't walk alone. Pull out your intestines and wrap them around your neck.

This is a method to overcome the attachment to the body. We don't realize how much attachment we have for it. We don't realize how much we feel this body is a part of our self-identity. It's very important to overcome attachment to it. The best way is by either the body contemplation — where you see the parts of the body — or by the *asuba* contemplation — where you see the loathsomeness of a living body or the dead body, either one. These are important ways to break that attachment. But we must understand very clearly that we are not building up hatred for the body. That's wrong. We want to see only its loathsome nature. It's rather like opening your refrigerator and seeing a rotten piece of meat that has been there the last five weeks. You'd feel it was loathsome, but you wouldn't feel hatred for it. You'd just take it out and drop it in the bin. That's all. It's the same with the body. It isn't hatred we want, that's wrong. We want the experience of loathsomeness; and the feeling that we've grasped this body at birth, that we're stuck with this body and that we have to live with it until it dies. Still, while we are in this body we have the opportunity to develop Dhamma. It gives us that opportunity, and because of that it's quite a valuable thing. We must use it in the right way to overcome the *kilesas* we have. This is the purpose. It's not to hate the body or get rid of it. That would be quite wrong.

I try to overcome attachment by thinking about my dead body eating the dead body of a fish.

That does overcome the attachment. What you're doing is getting a feeling of the incongruity of it. When we see things that don't fit together, it makes us feel peculiar. It's like that with the body: the incongruity of the loathsomeness of the body as opposed to the normal way we think about it. The two don't fit. They're opposite to each other. Our attachment to the body is one thing. When we are attached to the body we think of it as being beautiful and wonderful. It's something everybody wants. When we see it as what it really is, the two views don't fit together. It seems incongruous. It can sometimes make us laugh...or cry.

Sometimes you may feel as though you are walking with a living corpse gets that experience. If you get that feeling quite strongly, the tendency is for the *kilesas* to try and block the feeling. So you become afraid of it. At some point, you must face up to it. When you feel strong enough you must face up to it and accept it as the truth.

Think about breathing. You haven't stopped breathing since you were born, and you'll go on breathing until you die. What a burden. Think of that: the breath always going in and out. See the *dukkha* of it. This body relies on that breathing completely. It keeps this body going. When that stops, the body stops. The dead body can't eat the dead fish then.

I don't see the breathing as a burden, but sometimes I think about having to eat and sleep again, again...all just to get older.

If you wait for old age before you start meditating, it's too late. I remember I once gave a talk at Wat Boworniwes. Somebody had arranged that time so I could give a talk on Dhamma to some Westerners. Mrs. Josie Stanton said that she thought it best to live your life first, and then turn to Dhamma when you grow old. Without thinking I replied that the Buddha said that you shouldn't wait till your hairs are gray before turning to Dhamma. Her hair was gray, but I wasn't actually thinking about her when I said that.

Mrs. Stanton, when she first came here asked if the monks were quarrelling because they didn't talk when they were putting out the morning meal.

Yes. People in the West often think like that because they're talking all the time. When they're talking all the time, they're not thinking about what they're doing. Their minds are wandering about all over the place.

When one talks or does things quickly while practicing mindfulness, there is a tendency for one's intention or purpose to go way ahead. One has to run to catch up with it. What's happening is that the mind is not keeping in the present. It's going into the future, or into a prediction of the future, and the person tries to catch up to it. I've found when talking about a certain subject that if I get slightly diverted off the theme, I get so caught up in that I forget what I was talking about before. I get concentrated on the diversion. It didn't happen much when I was younger, but now it tends to.

Talking is alright if you are talking on something purposeful. When you have some good reason for talking and you watch what you say, that's not a problem. Otherwise, talk is like bubbles coming up from inside oneself. It's strange how we get an idea inside and that idea is completely formed internally in one *sankhāra*. When it comes up, we have to bring it out and explain it, either to somebody else or to ourselves. A lot of our thoughts consist of just this: explaining things that we have already thought about. We know perfectly well what it is we mean to say because the whole thing is perfectly formed inside. But then we have to think of words and concepts to fit the meaning, so we go over and over it. It can take an awful long time, and waste a lot of time too.

This is the way the *kilesas* get hold of us in speech. They always make us think verbally, in words. It's good to examine words because they form a very large part of our thinking. If we can stop words, we can get quite a bit of calm. We must question why the *kilesas* always bring up words. The reason is that we find ourselves in a situation that we believe is true and real, but in order to confirm its reality we have to keep thinking about it to make sure that it remains as real as we think it is. Words are the things that build up our world. We're building up our own situation, our own environment and our own past. Thinking about the past reinforces our own background. If we didn't have that past reference, we might drop into a state where we didn't know where we were, who we were, or what we were. We would feel then like a boat without an anchor or a rudder. We'd feel adrift.

We all need a background, to some extent, but a time comes when we have to cut off the background and go beyond it. But we can't do it too quickly; otherwise, we are left with too much uncertainty. Fear can come up too. So we must have a background; but we must realize that the background holds us back and keeps us attached to the world, our environment, people, places, things and so on. Words are a big part of that. In order to develop *samādhi*, it is very useful to learn to control words, control speech. The important thing is the speech inside, the dialogue that's going on inside all the time. The *samādhi* is much more difficult to develop while that's going on because it's pulling the mind back to the world all the time.

What is the difference between thoughts and words?

Thought doesn't have to have words. Thought can be in visual forms. It can be in pure symbols without any words attached, just knowing. We have to put it into a form that we're familiar with.

When we gain a new understanding of something, we then think about it in words in order to reinforce that understanding, to put it in perspective so that we can return and refer to it again. When it's something good and necessary, it's the right thing to do. But it also happens with bad things. We reinforce those and go back to them time after time. That has exactly the opposite effect, and it goes all wrong. So we must learn to control these thoughts and words. It's not a matter of stopping them all together — you can't do that effectively for very long. It's a matter of getting them under control. The best way of getting them under control is to stop them temporarily. Stopping them temporarily can be done by putting your attention on the heart or solar plexus, either will do. If you keep your attention there, the words will stop. If you keep your attention up in the head, they'll go on buzzing all the time. You can have thoughts coming up that are nonsense. They are just nonsensical words coming up one after another that have no specific meaning attached to them. They just bubble up like the gas bubbles in Pepsi.

I find it difficult to not talk much, even here.

Generally, wanting to talk a lot is a signal to yourself that there is dissatisfaction — a discontent in yourself. Wanting to talk means wanting to relate. It's really means wanting something against which you can feel yourself. It's the idea: if I can feel myself, I know where I am and who I am. The self is a very elusive thing. It's shifting about all the time, so we like to be able to confirm that it's there. A lot of the thought is just that. The fiction of the self, or this impostor that we call a self, is a very important thing. This is the reason why we do so many things; the reason why so many of the *kilesas* come up. The self is a trick the *kilesas* use to push their way on us. When I have a self, then I must know who I am. To know who I am, I must have objects and things and people to surround me, to tell me who I am. Then points of views, attitudes, and things like that come up. Most of these

come from *kilesas*, the *kilesas* getting their own way. They help define what I am. I am this type of person; that is, the type of person I think I am. We may appear very different to other people, but we hold to the belief that: “I am this type of person”. We want to confirm this, so we act in certain ways that we think that type of person would act, and often make a fool of ourselves in doing it.

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The Internal Senses

Ajaan Mahā Boowa says that the only reason he has to continue living is to help people. Quite a lot of people who receive his teaching are not worth the effort. It is worth it only for those who have an interest in the practice of Dhamma. It's a problem for Ajaan Mahā Boowa. He's got the purpose to help people, but if he doesn't look after himself he won't last very long.

Quite a long time ago a person came to meet him whom he didn't want to see, so he just lay down as though he was asleep. Seeing him sleeping, the person went away. Ajaan Mahā Boowa got up, but the man came again, so he lay down again. This happened three or four times. There's no doubt that there isn't another Ajaan like him.

I stayed up very late and hardly slept a few nights ago and for a few days I've been completely exhausted.

I read a book about Christian monasticism that recommended if one went to sleep and woke up in the middle of the night, one shouldn't go to sleep again that night. If one doesn't get enough sleep one night, the next night he'll automatically sleep longer. One does that each time until it automatically adjusts itself. I am not sure how it would work, but it's a method some people use.

My body seems uncomfortable and I have a lot going on internally, which makes it hard to sleep well.

Keep a watch on food. Ajaan Mahā Boowa says that we should watch the food we eat to see which foods suit us and which don't. Find out which foods give us strength in the practice and which make us heavy and sleepy then adjust accordingly. That might be part of your problem.

These days I have a lot of thinking going on but I haven't got much anger.

The important thing is to keep the anger away, that's important. The only constructive thing you can do with anger is to turn it against the *kilesas*. Ajaan Mahā Boowa says that when he got angry with his *kilesas*, his practice

went very well. It worked like that with him. That's the only good thing you can do with anger.

I know that you shouldn't hurt people, but it's difficult not to do anything when they behave badly.

There's the old Buddhist story of the cobra that was told: "You shouldn't bite people, but there's no reason you shouldn't hiss".

More and more people are coming to do the practice now. It's difficult because the more people that come to do the practice, the more interference there is with each other in the practice. When there is a tendency to interfere with each other, people must look after their behavior, otherwise it causes trouble. Trouble builds up very easily when there is no Dhamma present in people's hearts. If there's Dhamma there, there won't be trouble. People will accept things, and find ways around it. The important thing is that people should try to always keep Dhamma within them. Keep the idea and attitudes of Dhamma in their hearts.

Dhamma, what is it? In the ultimate sense it's what we are all aiming at, what we are trying to reach. In the practical sense, it means Buddha-Dhamma, the training and teaching of the Lord Buddha. The teaching is the method that we have to use to get to that final Dhamma. We have to take up what the Buddha taught and try to practice it in ourselves so that we develop ourselves in the way the Buddha taught us. We mustn't think of Dhamma as a philosophy or anything of that sort. It's really a method. It's a true method because it works. The method given by the Buddha has the skillful means of the Buddha behind it to train human beings. It's very well-suited to people because of that. In that sense Buddhism is different from other religions. In Buddhism you are not required to have a belief in gods or other things you don't know about. All you need is a method for purifying yourself. The Buddha's method is a method that purifies your *citta* of the *kilesas* up to the point where you're at a high enough level to attain Nibbāna. Until you reach that point there isn't a possibility of attaining Nibbāna, it's too much of a jump. But once you've trained up far enough you can make the jump. You need to train and develop yourself as much as you can until you reach that point.

In developing yourself, the training in restraint is an important factor. Living with other people should be look on as an opportunity to control yourself and to give way to other people and help other people where you can. I don't mean that you should spend all your time doing that, but you should do what you can to promote the well-being of the whole situation in your environment. If everyone trains and acts in that way, there is no reason why a lot of people can't live and practice happily together. But you have to be quite careful of people whose characters like fire and petrol. The two come together and sparks fly. It's easy for that to happen. One has to watch out that doesn't happen. That is going completely against the way of Dhamma, against the purpose of the monastery.

Shouldn't the rules of the monastery be known and practiced along with Dhamma?

There is a regular monastic routine which everyone should keep to because then everyone knows what to expect. For example, when someone sweeps at the wrong time, it can upset other people. One has to be watchful. If its sweeping for a specific purpose, like the meditation path, then that doesn't matter. But it's best to avoid unnecessary sweeping.

People make *kamma*, but people don't understand the way of *kamma*. When they've been told the correct way to do something and they still insist on doing it their own way...why do they do it their own way? Maybe they don't understand the rules clearly. If they do understand but they still stick in their heels, then that's wrong. It's building up self, and that goes contrary to the way of Dhamma. Be clear, everything we do is *kamma* — *kamma* that later comes back on us. When we intentionally do things in the wrong way, those volitional acts then remain hidden within ourselves, within our hearts. When the time is appropriate, the results of those acts come up, often quite unexpectedly. This is the way of *kamma*. When bad *kamma* comes back on us, it can be quite hard. It can come back most unexpectedly, when things are the most difficult.

This morning in my sitting I saw an arm on my left side.

Many types of images like that come up in *samādhi*. They may come from one's own *kamma* and the peculiarities of one's own *citta*. Things like that are not very important. But seeing *dukkha* is important. When one sees *dukkha*,

one has a reason to get free from it. Knowing *dukkha*, one realizes the work one has to do.

When Ajaan Mun first began practicing, he experienced *nimittas* coming up constantly for about three months. Finally he realized that those *nimittas* didn't mean anything. He got no good results from them. He then turned to the body contemplation. He went to *kāyagatāsati*, investigation of the body. Then he started to get good results.

The way of practice is unknown to us. We've never gone this way before. Visual *nimittas*, or images, can come up; and sometimes sounds, too. If you're not used to them, they can seem to be very important. Images that reflect what we have seen externally don't mean very much. They resemble the images that come up from memory. When you've been out in the forest all day doing meditation, you'll often get images of leaves and trees coming up in meditation. It happens because these are the images from your environment. It's quite common. There are other common things that come up, like patterns on a cloth. I am not sure why this comes up frequently in people, but I suspect that it has something to do with the pattern of the retina of the eye, the pattern of the cells of the retina. I am not sure, but that's my guess.

If a thought comes up and you don't identify or cling to it and just let it pass by, then there is no kamma created....is that true?

No, that's not true. There is good *kamma* created.

Even if it's a bad thought?

Yes, because it is *kamma* done to avoid clinging. *Kamma* can be good or bad; there is also very good *kamma* and very bad *kamma*. When one does the right thing in the practice, that is good *kamma*. Any action done without *kamma* is not important. The only action that someone can do without *kamma* is completely accidentally or unintentional. Only the *Arahant* can knowingly do action without *kamma*, because there is no self-identity behind it. When we do action we believe it comes from a self-perspective, which means that *kamma* is created.

This idea of self is deeply ingrained and very important. It is one that hangs on until the person becomes *Arahant*. It is *māna ditṭhi*, the idea of “I am” — I have views, I have ideas, I have thoughts and so on. With our ordinary understanding in the world, the idea of self is necessary as well because we need a reference point to compare ourselves to other people. We must have some reference point. So we put up a self-perspective. That’s alright, it’s necessary. But then we cling to a very firm belief in the reality of that self, as an entity. That’s where the trouble really starts: when we believe in that self and react from that viewpoint. We then get opinions of ourselves as being more or less exalted, as being high or good or whatever it happens to be. What are these ideas attached to? They’re attached to one’s self, which is almost a nonentity. At best, we can say it’s an imposter. It’s not a true thing. So the whole basis of our thinking is wrong. Because of that, we make *kamma*, of course.

We don't know if what we're doing is right or wrong.

That’s true. Matters of right and wrong can be quite a problem really. Some things are obviously wrong. If it goes against the moral precepts, we know it’s wrong. Sometimes when problems come up there are two opposing solutions, and both seem to be right. This is where questions of right and wrong have to be sorted out with wisdom.

Can you let the Dhamma be the judge?

If you can bring it to the test of Dhamma, yes. You should be cautious because *kilesas* have a habit of getting into every corner. I don't think that being right or wrong matters much because you do what you understand to be right. Even if it turns out wrong, if you have the right intention, at least then you're learning and the level of your *citta* will be getting better. As it gets better, you can see more clearly.

In the practice, you should feel free to bring in all sorts of tricks, if you feel like it. Use whatever helps. If you’ve got your own special methods of holding the *citta*, use them. There is no need to ask.

I was using one step breathing in and one step breathing out while doing the walking, but I thought that was too much.

With experience one can watch all sorts of things at the same time. Mindfulness allows one to do it. When the mindfulness gets closer to the *citta*, it knows the things that are happening without any effort.

It's like you are guarding a place surrounded by a wall with several doors leading in. When things come in, you must run from door to door and back again to check on them. It gets confusing. When you remain in the center and know from there whatever comes in, then you are aware of everything. Mindfulness in the *citta* is rather like that. Similarly, if when you see something you put your mindfulness on seeing it, and then when you hear something you put it on hearing, the mindfulness must jump about all over the place. When it's centered in the *citta*, it knows whatever sensations come in, whether from seeing or hearing or whatever it is. The whole lot is known easily without any trouble at all.

Does that mean if I keep my attention on one point that I can feel the whole breath body?

Mindfulness would have to be down in the *citta*. It would have to be done from the *citta*. It may be going to the *citta* without you realizing it. That can easily happen. When you become fully mindful in meditation, everything is integrated as though you're completely aware of everything that is going on around without even trying. The experience is completely calm with no restlessness in it. That is when the mindfulness drops to the *citta*. But usually it doesn't stay there very long.

How can we make it stay longer?

Practice.

When it lasts, will the outside disappear slowly?

Yes. Normally the sensations are entering the *citta* and the *citta* is receiving them, which is *viññāṇa*. It is aware of sensations coming from all directions. We know the sensations; for instance, we hear a chicken and the mind turns

to that, or we see an object and the mind turns to that. It's moving all the time like that. When mindfulness goes deep inside, we tend to let go of senses, allowing whatever comes to simply come. Sensations no longer matter. Thinking stops, and there is simply awareness.

I can see a difference between the mind going out to an external thing and the mind just knowing a sound, without going out, without any movement.

Yes. Like that, the mind is definitely fixed inside. It's not going out, but it knows.

Is that like when something small falls on the roof and you don't get startled?

Yes. If you're truly mindful, you wouldn't get startled. Ajaan Mahā Boowa said once he was working with some bamboo and being mindful. Suddenly a snake appeared. Without losing his mindfulness, he carefully moved away from it. Normally, one might have jumped away from it, but he was not startled because his mindfulness was strong. Seeing it he, simply knew it.

When one has withdrawn from sensation and gone deep inside, one can experience the sudden impact of a sound, like rats on the roof; but that's a different thing. Bare mindfulness is when one doesn't withdraw but instead lets things come in as they like. One can then go inside to a very calm state.

What should I do when I hear the rats jump on the roof then?

There isn't much you can do other than try to get back into the practice quickly and realize that it isn't something to be startled by. You have to get use to things like that happening in practice. Even when something startling does occur, you're not affected by it as much.

There was a time when the Buddha was in meditation and a huge thunder storm occurred. Afterwards someone came along and mentioned the storm. The Buddha said: "I never heard the thunderstorm". In other words, *viññāṇa* was completely inside. The *citta* was completely inside.

Would that be the deepest samādhi?

I wouldn't like to guess where the Buddha was, but *appanā samādhi* is a state where the mind is completely concentrated inside, so it is not receiving sensations. It is said that the reception of any sensation requires the presence of the cause of the sensation, the sense base and the sense consciousness. Unless the consciousness turns to acknowledge an incoming sensation, hearing and seeing do not occur. It's like when your attention is fully absorbed in reading a book; you don't hear the chickens in the background. Once you turn your attention there, you hear them. When *viññāṇa* remains inside it no longer goes out to sounds, so you don't hear those things. Sometimes it's possible for a very loud noise to erupt and bring one out of deep *samādhi*. It is almost as though something hits one. It's extraordinary because one doesn't actually hear the noise until one withdraws from *samādhi*.

That state is valuable because you see what the world is. You see the world with a very clear mind. You see it as it is. You don't receive it in the usual, familiar way. We are so familiar with the world that we don't think about it very much. In that state, though, you see it clearly. Because of that, you can learn a great deal. It's valuable because you learn about the world; and when you learn enough about the world, you reject the world. You see that it is nothing but *dukkha*.

When one sits in that state, does one still have feeling in the body?

Yes, one has bodily feeling and one knows it completely.

Would you feel pain in that state?

If there was pain in the body, yes. But the body and the pain would be felt as something separate. One would know it as pain feeling. It would not be any less painful, but there would not be any grasping with thoughts like: "This is my pain or I am in pain or I don't like this". It would simply be seen as it is, that's all. It lessens the affect of the pain to the extent that one doesn't get concerned about it. No concern, no worry, no doubting.

While sitting I didn't feel the body or anything...I was up there somewhere, just up there, but I knew what was going on in my mind.

A very active, adventurous *citta* also requires natural ability. We say natural, but it probably comes from *kamma*, good *kamma*. Ajaan Mahā Boowa tells how Ajaan Mun's *citta* would sometimes go off like a rocket in meditation. It was very adventurous. With Ajaan Sao, it was actually his body that would rise up.

When one doesn't know what one's doing, one should be careful. It is like the Buddha's analogy of *jhāna* to a cow. A cow ventures out from its home area only as far as the adjacent area, then it comes back again. In that way, it knows where it goes. Only later does it venture to the next area. Thus it gets to know all areas before going very far.

It's the same with the meditation practice. If one gets into a state that one doesn't know, one should not go any further until one knows that state well. When one knows it, and knows how to get back from it, then one can go further still. One must know what one is doing, otherwise it can be dangerous.

Dhamma exists and the Paths exist, and you can see the reasoning behind them and the methods needed to get there, so why shouldn't there be results. The Buddha's teaching was designed for human beings, and human beings are not much different from what they were at the time of the Buddha. The view that the attainment of Arahantship is a thing of the past is a silly view. It's like saying that if your mix salt and sulfuric acid you can no longer get chlorine. It worked in the last century, but nowadays it can't be done. It's that silly. The attainment of Arahantship is a fact of nature. In fact, that state is there in us all the time. It isn't as though it's something new. Because it's there, it can be attained. What we're doing is clearing away all the rubbish. If we clear away the rubbish, we'll reach that state. Nibbāna is not something that can arise. If Nibbāna could arise, it would cease. It must be there the whole time. It is there in everyone, but it's covered up with all sorts of mess. Our job is to get rid of that mess. When we've gotten rid of the rubbish, then we can clear the last little bit and break through. There is nothing to stop us, except ourselves. Those who say it can't be done nowadays are essentially making a barrier for themselves. For them it

becomes impossible because the belief that it can't be done makes it impossible. If someone fully believes he can't become a millionaire, he'll never try. A person who believes he can may at least try; and if he perseveres, he may succeed. The person who doesn't believe he can do it doesn't even start. It's the same in the practice of Buddhist meditation.

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The Nature of Delusion

Ajaan Mahā Boowa doesn't like talking about *jhāna*, so I won't say much about it. Instead, Ajaan Mahā Boowa teaches *samādhi*. *Samādhi* is the method of developing calm that is sufficient to bring insight; that is, it lays a sufficient basis to use wisdom to develop understanding of Dhamma. Because *samādhi* is sufficient, I don't think Ajaan Mahā Boowa wants to teach any more than that. He says that people who naturally go the way of *jhāna* must go that way; but it's not worthwhile for other people to try to develop it. It seems as though there is something in the way of a natural ability in *jhāna*. I wouldn't like to say what it is, because I am not sure of it.

It is quite obvious that *jhāna* can bring about various psychic powers. Because of that, it is a wonderful field for the *kilesas* to play with. The *kilesas* can take hold of those results and use them for all sorts of purposes, which don't do anything to get rid of the *kilesas*. For that reason, it is far better to keep one's mind on the process of *samādhi* that leads to understanding, insight and the development of wisdom. That practice does what it should do. By doing that, one knows one is on the right path. Also, *jhāna* is not mentioned in the Eightfold Path, but Right *Samādhi* is. At least one knows what one is dealing with there.

Jhāna is explained in the *suttas*, but not thoroughly. Perhaps the Buddha explained it thoroughly, but down through the ages the description has been formalized, so it's difficult to be sure what's being talked about. It may have something to do with the ability to go deeply into concentration, but I am not sure.

In any case, I don't think it's necessary. There is a lot in the Dhamma that we can speculate about but, in the end, we don't know what the truth of it is. It is not so much that it might be untrue, but we just don't know about how to interpret it. Some aspects of Dhamma are quite difficult to interpret properly. Because of that, we have to keep our eye on the *kilesas*. Their interpretations are always biased, so they can always cause trouble. More than anywhere else, that is where we must look.

Primarily, the *kilesas* come under the heading of *tañhā*. The three basic factors of *tañhā* are greed, hate and delusion. You probably understand the greed and the hate fairly well, but the delusion is difficult to see. It's the one that catches us every time. Delusion is our worldview. It includes all our beliefs, our ideas and our views about everything. These things are all stuck in our memory. This is the importance of memory. We remember things and situations because we want security. For example, when we come to a new place we search around to find where the things we need are located. Having searched around, we remember where those things are. So we know where to look for them. All of that information is implanted in our memory, and we search around quite frequently to make sure everything is where it should be. We compare with memory all the time. If something has changed, we question the new order and then we adjust memory accordingly. We always want the assurance that things are more or less permanent. We're always looking for permanence — permanence in the sense that our memory tells us that things are as they were yesterday, or ten minutes ago. We're always trying to fix the world around us, our environment, so that we know it and feel secure in it. That lulls us into a sense of false security because it deludes us into thinking that our world is permanent, when in fact it's not. Everything is constantly changing. Even if we don't see it changing, the changes are there.

We must realize that change doesn't mean just change out in the world; it also means change in ourselves. When we see something from a different position, or at a different time, there is a change in that object. But the change is largely in oneself, the one who sees it. That's the real meaning of *anicca*: constant change. Everything is changing within ourselves the whole time. We remember seeing something in the past, but by the time we see it again it has gotten older. But more than that, in the meantime we have learned more about all sorts of things, so internally the thing is not seen in the same way. It seems to have changed, when in fact it's we who have changed more. The changes in us are much more important than the changes outside. These changes occur in our mind, our attitude, our understanding and so on.

When we see things, we compare them with our memory of them to see if the comparison holds up, to see if they're the same. We have developed an idea of permanence that we fix onto the world. Then, when it changes

dramatically — like when it’s destroyed by a bomb — we are really upset. It seems to have suddenly changed, but actually it has been changing the whole time. Our minds just gave it the appearance of permanence, that’s all. In that way, we tend to get deluded by way of seeing and understanding. We have to do that because we crave security. Without that feeling of security we would have to be constantly watchful of everything in our environment and that makes us feel uncomfortable.

This happens when monks go wandering in the forest. The forest is an unfamiliar place where there is very little for memory to fix on and compare with the past. The day-to-day natural pattern of change is easy to see. Monks can never tell when a tiger is going to pop up, or a big snake is going to come along — they just don't know. Because of that, their false sense of security is cut through, which allows the tendency to think in terms of permanence to drop away. That puts them in a better position to see *anicca* and to realize the insecurity that they live with all the time.

Fundamentally we are always insecure. Nobody knows when a blood clot will go into one’s heart. We just don't know. It’s always possible; it could happen at any time. This body is a dangerous thing. We have to look after it as best we can, but we also have to realize that: “This may be my last day ...I better keep my mind on Dhamma”. Then we can start trying to defeat the *kilesas*. The trouble is, we forget. If we could live our lives as though everyday is our last day, that would be very good. I think it was Dr. Johnson that said: “The knowledge that you're going to be executed that morning sharpens the mind wonderfully”. That is the attitude we should have. We should be aware like that all the time, but it’s difficult.

Ajaan Mahā Boowa talks a lot about *paccupanna-dhamma*, Dhamma in the present moment. The present moment is where you should be, as much as possible. When you can keep your mind in the present, your worries and concerns of the past and future drop away. The mind is just on this moment, here and now. You see then that the past is a fiction — it has no reality. The future is a fiction — it also has no reality. The only reality is this moment, and that’s all. Because there is nothing to pin on to it, you can't say that this moment is changing or not changing. By keeping as near as you can to that moment, you will find that the mind sharpens up and the *samādhi* isn’t difficult because mindfulness is always present. To keep the mind in the

present, you've got to focus on what's there, because there is nothing else to pin onto. The mind likes to pin on to things. It's natural for the mind to always be focused on something. So if you're going to keep it in the present, you've got to fix on what's right there in front of you, and nothing else. This is the relative present. To attain the true present is difficult. The true present is *lokuttara-dhamma*, which goes beyond the *kilesas*. But keeping your attention firmly in the present as much as you can is a very valuable practice. Keeping the mind in the present also overcomes the fear of death. When you are in the present you know that the future is illusory, so death doesn't exist at the moment.

If you feel "foggy", but you're mindful of that, is that okay?

If you can really be mindful, then that mindfulness will overcome the fogginess. Once you look at that and see what it really is, your mindful attention overcomes that problem state. It works the same with practically everything. When you turn to look at a problematic mental state, that problem tends to diminish. The thing that keeps the state going is taking your attention away from it by thinking about something else or trying to find some distraction to divert your attention. That usually doesn't stop it. At best it's a temporary cure.

Say a person feels bored. What is boredom? Boredom really means you can't fix the mind on anything. Concentration brings happiness. Boredom means that the mind is dispersed so it can't focus on anything long enough to bring up interest and feel contentment. When the mind is like that, it's bored. When you turn to examine that state, you immediately bring up something to concentrate on. That itself tends to get rid of the state.

Why do people climb mountains and cliffs? To me it's pretty obvious. You might say "because they are there", but that's hardly a good reason. The real reason is that when you're climbing a mountain you've got to be concentrated. If you aren't, you fall down. Such activities force one into concentration, which keeps the *kilesas* out of the way. Because of that, one feels happy. One likes the happiness and contentment it brings. The mind is in the present, and nowhere else. You couldn't afford to have it anywhere else. If you're climbing a vertical cliff, you must keep your mind on what

you're doing, or else you'll fall. That seems to me the obvious reason why people do dangerous activities.

People do things that interest them because the things that interest them tend to concentrate their minds and bring them happiness. As long as what they are doing is not contrary to the moral precepts, then it's probably a good thing. If people like to go climb mountains, they can.....but it's not for me.

Whatever we do, our motive is to get away from *dukkha*. That is what everyone is constantly trying to do. It makes no difference whether they're Buddhist or not. They always find *dukkha*, they are always searching for a way out of it. Even scratching a small irritation is the same thing: one is trying to find a way out of *dukkha*. It's as though we have a pair of scales inside, and as *dukkha* goes down on one side, we try to balance it up on the other side. We have to find the right counterweights to put on the other side. We test the *dukkha* inside. That is the function of feeling. Feeling is the test. It tests the situation to see if we like it or not. Feeling is testing if something is painful or not, whether it brings *dukkha* or not. We use that test the all the time. What we do depends on the results of that test. If it is unpleasant, we try to overcome; if it is pleasant, we try to increase it.

Pleasant and unpleasant are internal experiences. When a pleasant sensation continues for a long time, it ceases to feel pleasant and tends to turn painful. We don't realize how much of what we know, see, think and do is internal to ourselves. It's the same with feelings and sensations. There is no feeling out there in the world. Feelings are all internal. When something hits you, you feel pain. But the thing that hits you has no feeling in it; nor does the place on your body where it hits have feeling. The feeling is a reaction that arises internally as a result of the contact. The feeling is something peculiar to us. Because of that, it is hard to define it to anyone else. It's all inside. The senses are all internal. We see and understand the world through our senses in our own special way.

What is taste? Say you have roast beef with chili sauce: there is no taste in the beef or the chili. They are made up of chemicals, not taste. When those chemicals contact your tongue, they cause a reaction. From that reaction you get the taste. We say that the taste is in the food, but it isn't: the taste is in ourselves. We react to the food. It's all internal. We can understand this

intellectually quite easily, but only when we truly realize it do the attachments drop away.

The same is true of seeing. What we see changes when it goes into the eye. What enters in the eye changes into nervous impulses, or a kind of nervous code that is relayed to the brain. Somehow the brain changes those impulses into visual imagery, though we don't know quite how. From that process we see things. But because seeing is an internal process, we don't really know the thing we see. That is hard to realize because we have such a long history of thinking of people and things in the world as being out there; whereas, in fact, the world and everything in it are all internal. There may be a world out there, but it's not what we think it is. This is hard to realize.

Sound is another example. Truly speaking, what's out there isn't sound — its just vibration. It turns into sound when it gets inside us. What travels through the air are frequencies of vibration, which are then transformed into nervous impulses by the inner ear. The experience of sound takes place inside.

Yes, everything is a shadow of the *citta*. All the senses and their corresponding sense organs are different, but the nervous system backing them up is very similar for all the senses. We assume that what happens to the sense impulses in the brain is analogous to this. We then build up the world from that sense data. When the brain is finished with it, it's handed over to *viññāṇa*. *Viññāṇa* receives it and knows it. This is where the knowing comes from; it's in *viññāṇa*, which is a form of the *citta*.

Does that form the difference in each person?

No, the difference in each person will be in the whole of the five *khandhas*; for instance, in the background of memory, and in the way we tend to think. In order to know something, it must be identified against memory. The way we will identify it will depend on our own past. Different people will identify the same thing in quite different ways. People have different likes and dislikes, so when something comes up, one person will like it and another dislike it.

This is perception?

Perception is really a function of *viññāṇa*. *Saññā* is memory. In the West, *saññā* is translated as perception, but that's wrong. This came about because the first translations in the West were done by scholars. They had learned Greek and Roman and European philosophies, so they tried to apply those concepts to the five *khandhas*. They used the word perception for *saññā*, but that isn't its meaning at all. *Saññā* is memory, but it's the overall function of memory, not just mere remembrance. The perception of anything is *viññāṇa*. Perceiving means receiving and knowing. But consciousness is a better translation for *viññāṇa*. Consciousness means "awareness to know". It's really knowing together with awareness.

In that mental formation, is that where the kamma is formed?

That is where *kamma* is formed. It's formed there because that's where the thinking process takes place. The rest is all providing data for the *sankhāra*. What happens is that sensations come in and *viññāṇa* knows them. They're tested against memory to identify them, and then they're tested against feeling to see if you like or dislike them. Then the *sankhāra*, or the thinking process, gets hold of them and decides: "I don't like it, so I am going to do this ...or that". It's a rough way of putting it, but that's the sort of thing that happens.

Consciousness comes last in the list of khandhas. Does that mean it arises last?

There must be knowing before anything can happen. When we see a familiar object, there will be a reference to memory which will bring up the whole background memory. The thing is seen in a broad context. If it's unfamiliar, the mind has to go into the details of it and build it up into a picture. Each time it adds a new detail, it must identify it with memory. It goes through the whole process until it has enough data to identify it.

Childhood learning probably occurs something like that. As I see it, you can't describe the process in too much detail because the process going on in the mind will function according to what the situation is. In one case, it may go through the process very thoroughly; in another it may go through only parts of it. The mind is not like a machine that keeps repeating itself mechanically.

Look at an object and watch the way your eye follows it, the way your eye moves over it. It jumps all over the place, but generally it will follow the outline shape of an object. With a long object, it is likely to go up and down more. With a fat object, it tends to go around and from side to side more. The eyes' movement depends on the shape of the object.

Can we practice by looking at things, just know what they are and drop it there?

If your *citta* is truly focused internally, you may be able to. Mostly, it's very difficult to do that because you will jump to feeling automatically. So much of our awareness is automatic. We have habitual ways of experiencing things and we tend to follow those habits more readily than anything else. We tend to focus by habit. It's worth trying to look into your sense awareness; it can show you where some of the *kilesas* come from.

With feeling, I find it difficult to guard the sense doors. It's too quick.

See the senses as being internal requires a lot of work. You must go through them time after time after time, and examine them quite a lot. It can be done, but it's not easy. We tend to switch back to our normal method of awareness so quickly and easily. It just goes back again automatically.

Did the Buddha give any instruction about how to achieve the guarding of the senses?

Yes. The guarding of the senses comes under the heading of the *indriya samvara*. It means guarding or restraining the sense faculties. The first thing is not to let your attention wander about too much. Keep it inside. When you're walking, keep your gaze down — one plough length ahead. Instead of searching around looking, listening and thinking all the time, keep it inside. The restraint of senses is there automatically in the practice of mindfulness. If you're mindful, your senses will be restrained by that practice. So learn to keep the *citta* inside. That will help to restrain the senses. What the Buddha said specifically about restraining the senses came under the heading of *sīla*, but the whole of the meditation practice will also bring that about.

The main reason why the senses tend to be unrestrained is our interest in experiencing sensations. We want to know everything that is round about us. Partly, it's the feeling of security, or lack of security; but partly it's also *tañhā*. We're thinking there is something in this for us. When we see the reason why we crave sensations, we also see the reason why we should restrain the senses, and we also see the way to achieve it. When an inclination to look at something arises, and one deliberately restrains that urge and keeps the eyes down. Hearing is more difficult because you can't shut your ears. It can be difficult if you're up against large loud speakers.

The thing that interests me is to see how the *citta* can switch from one sense input to another. The ear must be receiving and hearing many different sounds all the time, but if you switch your attention to one specific sound, you won't hear the other sounds. The reason is that *viññāṇa* is acknowledging only that sound. *Viññāṇa* is required in order to hear. If the *viññāṇa*, the ear consciousness, isn't on the sound, then you won't hear it. When you focus on the sound of one particular chicken crowing, you won't notice the other sounds in your environment. They are still coming in the ear, but they're not heard. All sounds are coming in, but *viññāṇa* will only acknowledge what it is focused on.

What is it when for a long time a sound doesn't bother you, then all of a sudden it becomes annoying?

The reason why it doesn't bother you is that *viññāṇa* is satisfied somewhere else. When that satisfaction dies away, *viññāṇa* can easily focus on the sound; then, because of a lack of satisfaction, you find the sound very annoying. This is the way we are.

I found it interesting in how Ajaan Khao studied pain and the five khandhas together.

When strong pain arises — either from illness or from sitting long hours — it presents you the opportunity to do research into the nature of that feeling. But it must be researched using wisdom. It's no good just sitting and bearing it. That doesn't work. That doesn't do anything. Putting up with the severe pain it may be very noble, but it's not of much use. Rather, you should investigate pain the whole time. Where is the pain? What sort of a pain is it?

What is the difference between the pain and the part of the body that hurts? Suppose the knee hurts: if you were to cut the knee open, where would you find the pain? You can't. You can find nerves there, the things that convey the sensation, but the nerves are not the pain. They're analogous to electric wires going to the brain – they just convey the signal. The pain isn't in the knee at all.

The feeling sense is probably the most interesting. I suppose it's the most primitive sense, and it's the most important of all the senses. There are people who are blind or deaf or who can't smell or taste anything, but one rarely finds someone who can't feel anything. There's only one case I've ever heard of.

Can one get away from the bodily pain by lifting up the mind?

Yes, one can do that, but should one. If it's the case where one is listening to a Dhamma talk, it's probably a good thing to do. But when doing meditation practice, the important thing is to know that feeling as best you can.

You must look at the pain and question it. Just enduring the pain is not enough. That doesn't help. For example, you can question: "I feel the pain in my knee, but where am I? Where am I who feels this pain? Am I in my knee? If I'm not in the knee, then the one who feels the pain and the knee are quite separate. Why am I so bothered about it?" That's one way to do it.

You should never investigate pain with the intention of trying to get rid of the pain, because that's *tanhā*. You should do it in order to know that pain and realize its nature, in order to know what feeling is. When you question it in that way, you begin to realize that the pain and one who knows the pain are two separate things. Because of that, why are you so worried about the pain? Why do you call that feeling pain anyway? Another feeling you call pleasant. What's the difference? Why should you think of one as being painful and the other as being pleasant? Search then to find out the difference between the two.

Is the pain really located in the knee? You can search all the tissues and bones and ligaments, but you won't find the actual pain in any of them. There may find nervous reactions taking place there, but none of them are

pain. They are merely processes. The nervous reactions come up the spine into the brain, followed by a reaction in the brain. In that case, should you be feeling the pain in the knee or in the brain? Where, in fact, is the pain? The mechanism of feeling is in the brain. So if the reaction takes place in the brain, why do you feel it in the knee? Question yourself like this; the answers are interesting.

What you find out is that there is a “feeling body”. It’s a mind-made body that is coincident with the physical body, and that mirrors the physical body. It’s a phantom body; it’s not a physical body at all. It’s a mental construct which simulates the body. That mind-made body is the body we know through feeling. The pain is located somewhere in that simulated feeling body, so we associate that part of the body with the pain. If you investigate this carefully, you will see it for yourself. Then you will realize that the body you really know is the feeling body. But you have to see that for yourself.

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Body Citta and Self

So many things are dangerous nowadays, but people are still careless. The roads are the best example. The number killed by elephants is small, but motorized elephants are very powerful. They kill a lot of people. People have to be careful. It's also hard to know how much of it is *kamma*. It seems to be the way of *kamma* that people who have bad *kamma* tend to put themselves in a position for that *kamma* to bring results. They do this quite unknowingly. Often they seem to just walk into it. They walk into a situation they wouldn't normally have gone into and they find themselves in a position where the odds are good that the results of their *kamma* will come to fruition. It makes one wonder what we are, what our nature is.

We have views about who we are and who other people are based on what we see in the world around us. But the truth is quite different. It's not like we imagine it to be. The truth about ourselves is more mental than physical. Physical bodies are not people. The physical bodies are something that we might call "people that grasped". People grasp hold of physical bodies and use them. Their delusion then makes them identify with these bodies. When people identify with their bodies, they become concerned about them. Because the body is the basis of their life, they're afraid of losing their bodies. The body is like a home, a home they can come back to. When their minds go whizzing off somewhere else, they can always come back to base. It anchors them, so they feel secure in this base. If the base wasn't there, where could they come back to? There is nowhere to come back to. They are set loose and they drift. People want a base, an anchor to hold on to.

People grasp at bodies because they feel secure in bodies, even though the body is not a very secure thing. It can easily die in all sorts of ways, some that can be avoided and others that can't. When disease strikes, we don't even know it is coming until it's there. At the same time, the body is very sensitive. It relies upon a suitable environment, which means we have air to breathe, temperatures that are reasonable for human life and protection from other animals and things. We need all these factors in our environment. If we don't have them, or if they change, the body will die. We have to have temperature lower than fifty degrees Celsius and above minus forty. Because of that, our bodies are vulnerable, so we should really be looking for security

in other ways. When we realize that in fact the body does not offer us the security that we want, we should examine the nature of that insecurity to see if there isn't a better way than grasping at the body to find security.

We will see that our sense of insecurity is created by the *kilesas*. It's because of the *kilesas* that we don't know where we've been or where we're going or what the mind is going to grasp at next. We just don't know what will happen next. Our only option is to strive to overcome those *kilesas*. Overcoming *kilesas* is the only way to gain a security that is completely unshakable. That's the only way to do it. If we try to do it by grasping at a material object, we will always fail because we can never really possess that object. We can't even say that this body is really ours.

The body is here and we know it, but how do we know it? We know it by sensation. The one who knows those sensations isn't the same as the sensations. It's the one who knows the sensation, so it is separate. Because of that, we never really have possession of the body. Let's say that you want to possess an object, so you purchase it. Then you think: "Now it's mine." But truly speaking it isn't yours at all — it's just an object out there in the world. It is always separate. The one who claims ownership is something internal. The internal owner can never contact that object directly. It is only contacted as something external, something separate from oneself.

In a similar way, this body is separate from oneself. When we investigate its nature we see that we know the body by sensation: by seeing, hearing, tasting, and touching, but mostly by feeling. We know it by that, so this is the thing we are attached to, and this is the thing we think belongs to us. While we think the body belongs to us we're under its influence. Whatever happens to the body happens to us. When it becomes sick, we get worried and depressed. If the body gets injured, again we're unhappy. We are unhappy because we're attached to this body. We think of it as who we are, as an integral part of our self. Whatever happens to it happens to us. Once we realize what our true nature really is, we are freed from our attachment to the body. Then what happens to the body is something that happens separately, externally. It's as though somebody else's body is injured or sick. Pain is experienced in the body, but there is no concern about the pain. It isn't me. It isn't mine. Because it isn't me or mine, it never has the same sway over us. It never pulls us along with it. The mind remains separate and free.

Being free and separate, it is also secure. It knows that the *kilesas* have been at least partly eliminated. It knows that whatever happens it won't go in the wrong way. It won't go bad. This is the thing we have to work for.

Someone asked Ajaan Mahā Boowa: “I see a light, is that the *citta*?” Ajaan Mahā Boowa took a flashlight and shined it across the room. He asked: “Where does that light come from?” Then he said: “The *citta* is like the flashlight. It's the one that produces the light.”

Although they are produced by the *citta*, lights that appear in meditation are external to the *citta*. The one that produces the lights is the one we want to know. When you want to know the *citta*, the one that produces the light, how can the *citta* reflect back in order to know itself? You can only know the *citta* by being it, by cutting off all else and dropping into that state. That's all you can do.

Ajaan Mahā Boowa says even though you go into a room that's empty, you are still standing in that room.

Yes, as long as you are still there, it's not empty; in other words, what one calls oneself is still there. So the room is not entirely empty with you in it. If you think the *citta* is “a something”, then that “something” is still there. But, in fact, the *citta* isn't something we can pin down like an ordinary object. It's obviously not an object. It's the one that knows all the objects. It cannot pose as an object. Frankly, we don't know properly what we are talking about. *Citta* is a word we use because it's convenient. It's a word that we must somehow define, although it's something we can't actually point to. So we can never get to it with words and concepts.

It's in the body but it has no fixed place in the body.

When you look at that chicken over there for a while and pin your attention on it, the *citta* is over there, because your attention is pinned on to it.

I also read that awareness and the knower are not the same thing.

Awareness is really a function, whereas the knower is a noun. When we talk about awareness, it's very much a functional thing, like a verb. "To be aware" is a verb. It's a function of the *citta*, the one who knows.

Could it be that the citta is awareness and the knower is the heart?

No, I don't think so. The *Abhidhamma* says that there are different types of *citta*. The type of *citta* is defined by the characteristics of that *citta*. For instance, there is a *citta* with greed. It's an automatic type of *citta*, it's not deliberate; but it's volitional all the same. It comes up with other unwholesome factors too. The concomitance of all the factors within that *citta* defines that type of *citta*. But the *citta* itself doesn't define itself in any way. These are merely qualities by which one defines a type of *citta*. For instance, we can say that a person's *citta* has greed or hate or determination present, meaning that the mental state of his *citta* is like that. The *citta* is what these mental states cling onto. But in the end, the whole lot is a delusion.

These states are really more like functions, or processes going on. They are very complex too. The advantage of being mindful is that you begin to see these states, and to understand for yourself how they work. Once you see you're your mind works, you start questioning the whole nature of who you are. It is good to frequently remind yourself that what is here right now at this moment is all that exists. This is everything. Future and past are not here. You can't find them. The past is gone and future hasn't come. Only this moment is here. Keep reminding yourself of that. Then when you experience states of longing for the past or the future you can remind yourself that neither of them exist right now. Longing for the past or the future is just a delusion. Being mindful in that way will bring you back to the present moment. In the present there isn't much trouble. The trouble is in the past and future.

We can still plan for the future as long as we are fully aware that we are doing it quite deliberately now in the present. But usually we forget.

We all have habitual ways of doing things. We have habitual modes of thinking, behaving, acting, seeing and understanding. These habits so often determine our mental state. Because of that, it's difficult to realize what the truth is; difficult to bring it into the present. Even when we are focused in the present, our habitual ways are usually hovering in the background. If our attention lapses a bit, they take over straightaway. The only thing way to overcome that is to keep on practicing the modes of training in Dhamma until the situation is seen more and more clearly. Then we begin to realize how delusory those concepts of past and future are; how they are not real things at all.

We are full of emotional states. A certain situation acts as a reminder that brings up memories of the past, which then give rise to a particular set of mental conditions. The mood and the emotional states of that past situation come up with it as well. Then it dies away and another one comes up. We have to see this. We have to watch them coming to know them and realize where they come from. We must realize that our minds are under the sway of these moods all the time. They are pushing us about all the time, so try to be watchful. These moods are not all bad; some of them are quite good, especially the ones that come from the teaching of Dhamma. But mostly, the moods that come up are the bad ones.

If you practice this long enough will they then be stable?

No, these emotional states will still come up, but the more you practices and the more you see them coming up, the more you are able to just drop them when they're undesirable. A mood arises and you say: "I know what that is. Drop it." It's as though you have a lot of cinema pictures that you bring up to play with. The trouble is, when they come up, you becomes interested in them. When you become interested, that strengthens them. You must realize that you have thought about that emotional situation many times before, so thinking about it again merely repeats the same old story, which just keeps you more firmly anchored in *saṃsāra*. Then you should think: "Drop it, drop it. I don't want that."

Why does a man who is already very wealthy keep trying to make more and more money? Because he likes doing it. It's playing. It's *taṇhā*, but it's what we might call unnecessary *taṇhā*. It's just playing. It's just him trying to prove

to himself he's better than other people. It's like a sportsman who wants to prove he's the best boxer or footballer or whatever; it's a similar sort of thing. The problem is that it causes a lot of trouble with other people. It doesn't stop with that person; if it just stopped with him it wouldn't matter. The whole thing is under the influence of the *kilesas*. It's not truly going higher and higher. It's not true progress.

I think I had trouble investigating pain because I didn't have enough mindfulness.

Yes, the mind splits into two parts there: one is doing the *parikamma* and the other is somewhere back there doing something else.

Not wanting pain to stop is an idea you can take up when the investigation of pain becomes interesting. When it becomes interesting, then you may feel that you don't want it to stop yet because you want to figure out the true nature of pain first. That is your intention. When that happens, though, the pain usually does stop because that's the way of the *kilesas*. It's the same when fear comes up. If you have practiced the way properly where fear is concerned, you will immediately jump on that fear as being an opportunity to investigate fear and learn more about it. Because fear is important, you will want to examine it carefully. In that case, you don't want it to go away. However, when you put your attention on it, it usually stops very quickly. It doesn't give you much of a chance.

When fear comes up at night I think about Ajaan Mun staying alone in the forest sitting under a tree and it is ok.

That's one way to overcome fear. It's a good way too.

I try to overcome a tired, sleepy mind.

There are several ways to overcome that. Try sitting bolt upright. Don't slouch at all. Sit bolt upright and keep your body in that position. If that doesn't work, stand. Do whatever it takes to overcome the problem. You can knell if you like. Another way is to sit in a chair. When sitting in a chair, you can't just give in to sleep, because if you do you'll fall off. If you fall off the chair, that wakes you up quickly. You can fall over even while sitting on the ground.

Ultimate Reality

If there is a conventional reality, there must be another reality as well.

Yes, very much so. There is also an ultimate reality, but we can't use words to describe it. By its very nature it's beyond language. Because words are relative things, whatever we might say about it is relative. Words are only symbols. We can talk about bottles and concrete and other material things because we can refer directly to those objects. There is always a relationship between us and them. But with *paramattha*, or ultimate truth, there is nothing you can point to. In a court of law one must tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. There we are dealing with conventional truth. The basis of conventional truth is mutual acceptance. When people agree on certain conventions they become accepted truth. This principle applies to sense data as well. The way we define the things we see and the distinctions we make between visual objects are matters of convention. It's practical of course. The conventional view of the world that we have been taught since childhood has become such a deeply-ingrained part of us that it seems quite natural. When we talk about a tree, what are we talking about. Although every tree is different, there are certain characteristics that define a tree for us. That is what's meant by conventional reality.

Did the Buddha talk about conventional reality and ultimate reality?

He spoke mainly about conventional reality; about ultimate reality he said very little. One can't teach absolute truth, there is no way to explain it. Because of that, we can say that none of what the Buddha taught is absolutely true. Conventions are very important. The world is riddled with conventions. Symbols are a very important aspect of the conventional world. We are full of symbols inside. We symbolize everything. This tendency seems to be a trick of the mind. Because our minds can't handle too much information at once, we tend to group complex objects into a single symbol. Take that tape recorder. Our minds cannot handle the complexity of all its electronic parts, so we group them into one thing we call a tape recorder. Then we need to refer only to that symbol. We are constantly grouping things and creating symbols for them.

Political parties, for instance, are very complex organizations, which we simplify in our minds by giving them a name. That disguises their complexity. It also disguises the truth. We may identify the name with either something good or something bad. But that judgment is false because not everything in a complex organization is either entirely good or entirely bad. In some ways, conventions are very convenient things to have; but they can also disguise the truth. They can prevent us from seeing the truth of the matter. A person is something very complex. But we easily make judgments about people, thinking “I don't like him”, based on superficial observations. Whereas people are made up of a bundle of moods and emotions that are in such a constant state of flux that they are never really the same from one moment to the next. It's very easy to misjudge people in that way.

The totality of the five *khandhas* is what we call a person. That reduces the personality down to five aggregates, but each of those five are very complicated. None of the five are static; they are changing all the time. They form an enormously complex organism that is constantly changing like a vortex that whirls around continuously. But we simplify that all down to one individual. We always think of it as one person – just one. We should try to realize how complex each individual is.

Is the citta different from the five kandhas?

The original *citta* is, but *vedanā*, *saññā*, *sankhāra* and *viññāṇa* are aspects of the *citta*. I always like to look on them as being like waves on the ocean. The original *citta*, the real *citta*, is like the entire ocean; whereas *vedanā*, *saññā*, *sankhāra* and *viññāṇa* are like waves on the surface. They are not separate from the ocean, but they are not the same thing either. Non-duality occurs when the *citta* goes deep and there is just knowing. In the state of *ekaggatā*, no object is known – there is only the state of knowing.

Is this place of “just knowing” different from samādhi?

A thousand and one different experiences come under the heading of *samādhi*. It includes all sorts of odd things. Sometimes a person feels a hundred feet tall, very solid as if made of rock; at other times one may feel as though one is thick and vast. There are many such experiences.

Samādhi is a state of mind where the mind becomes absorbed in an object until all the mental factors come together. Essentially, the mind becomes integrated, the mind becomes one. When that happens, the mind becomes very strange, which allows all sorts of odd experiences to come up. *Samādhi* has three distinct levels. The *khaṇika* level is momentary. One experiences a taste of it for a short while, perhaps only a few seconds, and then it disappears. That's *khaṇika samādhi*. The second level is *upacāra samādhi*. *Upacāra samādhi* is the level where all sorts of things can happen. One may see images or hear sounds, or have psychic perceptions like knowing the future or seeing things at a distance, for example. Frightening experiences can also arise in *Upacāra samādhi*, so this is an area that one should be careful. Finally, there is the *appanā* level, which is the level of *samādhi* that one should try to attain. The *appanā samādhi* occurs when the *citta* drops to the heart and converges into one. The body disappears, the breathing stops, everything goes. There is no subject, no object — just oneness. That is a state of complete happiness and contentment that must be experienced to be understood.

If you could stop your mind from thinking and hold it still for long enough, you would automatically drop into that state of *samādhi*. But as soon as the mind starts moving in that direction, the *kilesas* immediately jump up and begin to cause doubt and anxiety, causing that calm mental state to break up. The *kilesas* are constantly disturbing the mind and preventing it from settling down. The *kilesas* are like the wind that blows up the waves on the surface of the ocean. When the wind stops, the waves calm down and simply recede back into the ocean. The *kilesas* can also be compared to muddy water. If the water remains still long enough, the mud will settle down to the bottom, so the water becomes clean and clear.

There are two main advantages of attaining *appanā samādhi*. First of all, it provides an unshakable refuge. You know clearly that when you are in that state nothing can go wrong. Secondly, when the mind becomes tired from investigating a lot with wisdom, you can use that state to give the mental factors a rest. In fact, you can use to refresh the mind at anytime. *Samādhi* always leaves a very strong aftertaste of calm, a state where the mind is no longer stubborn or difficult, but rather completely pliable. So, when you withdraw from *samādhi*, at least partially, you can use wisdom very well. You can then turn it to do the work of investigating the body. That calm mental

state allows wisdom to penetrate without difficulty so that the body's true nature can be seen more easily. It is quite different from one's normal wisdom practice when one thinks and reasons about the body intellectually, and the mind doesn't want to do it because the *kilesas* always interfere suggesting other things. You're free from all that. It's a very valuable state if you can get there, but it's not easy. There are many barriers to overcome.

If you can get there once, is it easier to get there again?

When Ajaan Mahā Boowa first wanted to learn *samādhi*, he asked his preceptor, who told him to repeat “*Buddho*” in the heart. So he did that continuously until his mind dropped into *samādhi*. When he came out he knew it was right, but later he found that he couldn't repeat it again. He tried and tried without success until he got really angry with himself. That went on for over a year before he decided that he was going to stop worrying about not getting the results he wanted and start focusing solely on the cause — the repetition of *Buddho*. Doing that, he soon attained *samādhi* again. Then he realized what the fault was: he was thinking all the time of the results he wanted in meditation, instead of focusing on the causes that bring those results. So, as you can see, it's not always so easy. Having reached a clear state, the *kilesas* are all too ready to muddy up the water. *Samādhi* is very valuable indeed, but it's not easy.

Jhāna is also samādhi, but there are eight different jhāna.

The different *jhānas* represent different levels. The first four *jhānas* are where the *jhāna* factors are getting more and more subtle; while the last four *jhānas* are where the *jhāna* objects are becoming more and more subtle. I don't know enough about the difference between *jhāna* and *samādhi*, so I don't like talking much about it. Ajaan Mahā Boowa also doesn't like talking about it either. He says it is one of those subjects that you can only talk about with someone who has experienced it and knows it. If someone asks him a question about *jhāna*, he just quotes the *suttas*.

Ajaan Mun developed *samādhi* to begin with, but he came to the point where he was getting visual images coming up all the time. He focused on these visual images for about three months. Then he reviewed his experiences and realized that he hadn't gained any real peace of mind from pursuing them. So

he decided to turn to body contemplation instead, which brought him the desired results. Developing *samādhi* up to the point where one can get the mind more concentrated and keep the *kilesas* at bay is valuable, but going much further than that gets less and less valuable. The thing that's necessary is to use what you have gained from *samādhi* to develop wisdom. Wisdom is the thing that matters, all the time.

In fact, people who have the capacity to really keep their minds on what they're doing are able to develop wisdom straightaway. But not many people can do that. It is usually advisable to have some *samādhi* experience as well. It can be valuable later on when you get exhausted while investigating with wisdom. Also, there are certain things encountered in wisdom practice that would normally be very difficult to accept because the *kilesas* are too much against that idea. But when the *kilesas* have been pacified by *samādhi*, that objection, that blockage, is no longer there. *Samādhi* can help make it much easier for the wisdom to develop.

We have *kilesas*, and our task is to use whatever method we find works to get rid of them. It is not always an orderly process. One usually develops *samādhi* first and then develops wisdom. But it doesn't always work like that. It isn't always that *samādhi* comes first and wisdom comes later. You must develop whatever is required to deal with the problems that arise at the time.

How much samādhi do I need to develop before I develop wisdom?

No, that's not the way to think. You must develop *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā* together at the same time. *Samādhi* is the one to concentrate on to begin with, but that doesn't mean you shouldn't use wisdom too. You definitely should. So when you finish a period of *samādhi*, it's a good idea to turn and do some investigation. Develop the wisdom by investigating the body. When you do that as training, you don't fall into the trap of getting addicted to the pleasant state of *samādhi*. Otherwise, if you can attain *samādhi* easily, you might be tempted to do *samādhi* the whole time. And because developing wisdom is hard work, you might lose interest in that. It's like how very difficult it is to get up in the morning when it's cold. One doesn't want to make the effort. One would very much prefer to go to sleep again. It's very much like that with *samādhi*. But if you develop the habit of doing some wisdom practice after withdrawing from *samādhi*, this habit can become

ingrained. Then there isn't the tendency to get caught in the pleasantness of *samādhi*.

In developing *samādhi*, you must have mindfulness focused on your object of attention. It's that mindful attention that you want to carry over into wisdom practice. Mindfulness is the thing you need the most. If we naturally had good mindfulness, there would hardly be any need to practice *samādhi*. It's the mindfulness that prevents the mind from jumping about that we lack. On the other hand, if we have good mindfulness already, *samādhi* is quite easy. It works both ways.

Try reviewing yourself from time to time. Question yourself: "At this moment, what do I know?" Examine your body and see that there are feelings present, and sounds coming in, perhaps smells and tastes too. Then ask yourself: "Where does all this knowledge go?" It all goes somewhere inside you, so you can search for the center where all these sensations converge. It's really a matter of trying to get down to your present situation, right now.

With sound, for example, the external stimulus is a purely mechanical process. The end result of that mechanical process is a vibration in the inner ear. But that's not sound — it's merely a kind of vibration. Sound is something strange that occurs within us. We create the sound. We create light and color much in the same way. There is no light out there at all. All that's out there is electromagnetic radiation.

I can see this in my mind, but in experience I can't see it.

In that case, you must try to make yourself realize it. Go over the theory of what happens step by step and then try to see it in yourself. Then go over it again. The point of going over it is to bring confidence in what you are doing. That confidence leads you more and more inward. In the end, you'll find that the sensations all converge in the heart.

People create their own futures. They create now what they will later become. Usually the future they create is something they don't want. By not wanting it, they actually create it. People worry constantly about things that they don't want to happen, and that thinking brings them about. The ghost

realm, for instance, is created in that way. People's thinking creates that realm of existence, and then they are reborn there.

Most of the *kilesas* that are concerned with *bhavāsava* come under the heading of *moha*. This is where wisdom is important. If you have enough mindfulness to develop wisdom directly, that's fine; but most people haven't. When they start investigating, they tend to go off on a wild goose chase. You must first do a lot of research in yourself to figure out what exactly *bhava* means. The human realm is one form of *bhava*. It is a realm of becoming, a realm of existence. There is the human realm and the *deva* realm and so on. We refer to them as different realms, or levels of existence, but they are really realms of mind. In the *Abhidhamma* the different levels of consciousness and the different realms of existence are equated. The realm one is reborn in will depend on the level of mind at the time of death. If the state of mind is good, it will be a good realm; if it is bad, it will be a bad realm. In that way, the mind creates its future place of birth.

What you can do is steadily develop wisdom. This is like trying to give up things. Mostly, you can't truly give up things because you don't know where your attachments are. So you should simply go on with the practice until wisdom has gained enough insight to bring understanding, at which point there will be no need to give up things because they are given up automatically the moment you see through them. It's not even so much a giving up; it's rather a feeling that "I've changed and I no longer want that...I no longer see it like that because something has changed inside me". Those previous attachments are simply no longer a problem. That's the correct way to break attachments. Even if you succeed at deliberately giving up something, you will just grab something else to take its place.

It is good to contemplate the nature of this existence in which we find ourselves. Look at the nature of the people in this world. See how much conceit they have, and how much wrong belief. Look at any newspaper and you can see it sticking out all over the place. The advertisements, you can see it in those too. Contemplate that until you become thoroughly disgusted: "I don't want to come back to this level again".

One of our troubles is that we don't see what our situation is and how strong the *kilesas* are. They're very strong. They attach us to the situation so strongly.

You can see that you are always making *kamma*, but you can't stop making it. There's no way. So you must try to be sure that you make good *kamma*, and at the same time avoid making bad *kamma* by cutting off those causes that lead to it.

Kamma tends to repeat itself. For instance, anger. When the chickens make a lot of noise, you experience an unpleasant feeling inside. That feeling is a result of past *kamma*. When that unpleasant feeling comes up, you don't like it. Anger arises. There's a desire to stop that feeling. You feel that "I don't like it!" But the angry thoughts associated with that negative feeling are new *kamma* that you make — new *kamma* that is very similar to the old *kamma*.

I was told about a monk who was meditating in the forest and a poisonous snake came across his lap. He sat very still as the snake passed. Snakes can't distinguish much unless something is moving. Many animals are like that. You can notice it with frogs. If a frog sees you it goes dead still because it thinks you can't see it. Tigers also can't see something unless it is moving. When the villagers want to kill tiger, they build a platform on a tree in the jungle near the carcass of a buffalo that the tiger has killed, and wait for the tiger to come. They remain dead still until the tiger feels confident enough to start eating. As long as they remain dead still, the tiger can't see them, even though the platform is in full view.

My experience is that fear and anxiety brings me away from samādhi instead of bringing me to the "point".

It will do that because fear is *kilesas*.

What about this fear of the tiger?

That's *kilesas* as well.

But they use it to get into samādhi?

That happens only with some people. If a person is afraid enough, the *kilesas* give way. When the person has trained his mind sufficiently, it works well in that way. But most people can't do anything when the *kilesas* whip up fear, they become petrified.

Is there something that you can investigate that increases security?

Don't worry about the security. When you turn to investigate with wisdom after you've been practicing for calm, that can bring up anxiety because you're in a position where the *citta* is very open. The mind will go into whatever your investigation finds, and the *kilesas* will be quite anxious about what you may discover. So you shouldn't do much investigation until you have much better control of *samādhi*. Investigating while the *samādhi* is not yet well-developed will probably lead to difficulty. It is probably best to keep going deeper into *samādhi*.

Perhaps I need to develop trust in the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha.

Saddhā, or faith, is very valuable. Faith is a problematic area for Westerners. Often they turn away from Christianity because of its emphasis on faith, but then throw out the baby with the bath water. Faith is necessary. After all, we have to have faith in normal everyday things. We must have faith that the sun will rise in the morning. We can't know for certain that it will, but we've got faith in it. So *saddhā* is very, very necessary.

We especially need to develop trust in the Dhamma, in the teaching of the Buddha. One way of doing that is to learn more about it. As you learn about it, you see the truth of it. Seeing the truth tends to help promote faith. Using wisdom to support faith is a very important way of developing in Dhamma.

Faith on its own is dangerous. Some people have a lot of faith, but no wisdom. Faith without wisdom can lead one astray because the faith can hook on to anything. There is nothing to control it. This sect in now with the gas, there's A lot of people have faith in the leader of that Japanese sect that uses poison gas, but he's a crazy man. Those people have hooked onto that man, but they have no idea what they are getting into. It seems to be an awful mess. This is what happens to faith when it's not supported by wisdom. Wisdom will always help lead faith in the right direction. The more clearly

we understand the nature of things, the more reason we have for confidence. Faith is necessary. It can also help to overcome anxiety. When you have a point in your meditation where fear or uncertainty continually comes up and causes the practice to break, each time you return to that point you gain more confidence until finally you can go beyond that blockage. Then you can face it without difficulty.

If you do find fear coming up, it's important to deal with it properly. Fear comes from *kilesas*, and it can be an awful hindrance. It can even be dangerous. The fear is the danger, not the thing you are afraid of. The right approach to take with fear is to investigate it. What is the fear? What's its nature? Where is it located? In what way does it manifest? When fear comes up in meditation, one immediately looks around for something that caused fear, something external, a ghost or tiger or something like that. But the cause is not of that nature at all. What's happening is that the practice itself is producing changes internally. These changes give rise to fear, the feeling of fear. When the feeling of fear comes up, one's automatic reaction is that something must have frightened one. That's not what's happened at all. It's almost as though a chemical reaction has taken place and the fear is the result of that. It's not the same as when you see a tiger and you're afraid. It's quite different. It's come the opposite way around.

What about the fear of pain?

In that case, you yourself bring on the fear by thinking about the pain and the unpleasantness it causes. You build up the dislike of it which the *kilesas* very easily get involved in. An aversion for it comes up. It's important to face the fear and never run away from it. One must never run from fear. It's far better to come out of meditation than to go into a panic. If you feel that you can't hold it, or that you can't cope with it, then pull completely out of the meditation practice. That's far better than getting caught in something you can't face.

Wouldn't pulling out of the practice be a way of running away from it?

No, it's not running away from fear because when you run away from it you go into a panic. You pull out to avoid that panic. By coming out of the meditation, you can control yourself and review the situation to see what

happened so as to understand that fear is the real danger, not the situation that frightened you. You can resolve to face up to it next time.

Another important aspect of practice is when you withdraw from *samādhi*, you must come out gently and gradually. If you come out too quickly, it can be a shock to the *citta*. It can make the *citta* afraid to go into *samādhi* again. It can act as quite a hindrance. Just let it withdraw gently. Sometimes we don't realize how deep we are in *samādhi* practice. Coming out suddenly can be quite a shock, quite a change. Only then do we realize that we were much deeper than we thought. So come out gradually.

I was talking with someone about time: past, future and present. He made the comment that the present is going past very quickly. I thought to myself: It isn't. The present doesn't change. There's no change in the present. The present is just the present, and that's all. The present moment is a personal thing inside oneself. The change is taking place externally. The change takes place in events and external things that arise and die away — but those things are more or less an illusion. The present doesn't change. Everything round about is changing, but the present is a matter of the *citta* and that one doesn't change.

The world doesn't really know the present. When we talk about the world, what do we mean? We mean the typical worldly state of mind. When the mind is very scattered and not sticking on anything for any length of time, this produces a state of half sleep, a dreamlike state. In that state the delusion is almost complete. We have so much *moha*, so much delusion, that we are bound by our delusion to the normal worldview, to the way things seem in the world, and to accepted conventions. Being tied down by that brings us back to birth again and again. The conventions and the habits that we are so accustomed to: these are the things that bring us back all the time. So it's important to break up that delusion. But you can't do it too quickly. Like everything else in nature, the more quickly something changes the more violent it is. To change that mental state very quickly requires a great deal of strength inside.

A man came to me today asking about meditation practice. He said that he had a lot of anger coming up. He was doing a lot of investigation, so I told him to drop the investigation and develop calm first. When the anger came

up, he started investigating it, and that made matters worse. I told him to meditate repeating *Buddho*. He was doing the breathing practice, but the breath was too subtle for him. He needed something he could grasp hold of very easily.

Why did the Buddha teach the brahmavihāras?

Fundamentally to develop the attitude of *mettā*, *karuṇā*, *muditā* and *upekkhā* within oneself, within one's own heart. This is a method of overcoming the opposites, such as hatred, in the heart. For example, you practice *mettā* by considering people, because hatred is usually directed at other people. First you take a person you like or are neutral to and develop the attitude of *mettā* for that person. Then you go to somebody that perhaps you don't like quite so much and so on until you can find *mettā* for those people you hate. The important point is not so much sending the *mettā* out to them, but developing it within yourself. That's what's needed.

The Buddha also talked about spreading mettā.

To begin with, you must develop the *mettā* within yourself. Later when the *mettā* has developed, it has its effect externally. It's similar with the breathing practice. When the breathing practice leads to a state of calm, that calm will create a sense of satisfaction inside. Because you are satisfied within yourself, you will naturally think of the world in a positive way. The heart opens automatically; there's no need to practice it specifically.

In the West, some people think they are *mettā* broadcasting stations. It seems like *mettā* is flowing out from everybody. Mostly this is just conceit, out-and-out conceit. One must develop real *mettā* inside oneself first.

Sometimes if I can do a few minutes of mettā it makes going into calm easier.

If you find it works like then use it, but it's not generally taught in *kammaṭṭhāna* because other methods of practice are more prevalent.

What I experience is that if anxiety is coming and I can raise mettā at the same time, the anxiety disappears.

Yes, this is where you have the *mettā* inside already. The *mettā* is there, so you can bring it up; but you don't do it as a specific practice.

We can develop mettā, but how much can that affect other people?

It does have an effect on people, and the people in your environment react quite positively too. Because of that, it's a beneficial practice. But if you want to remain aloof and practice on your own, you must be careful because the *mettā* you have developed will attract other people.

Ajaan Juen says that all four brahmavihāras should be blended together.

If one doesn't have the first three, *upekkhā* can easily turn into a hard attitude where you don't care about other people. That's not the right attitude at all; it's quite wrong. So it's necessary to have the other *brahmavihāras* factors as well.

Finally there is *upekkhā*, which is the realization that everyone has their own *kamma*. We have our own *kamma*, and we can't alter other people's *kamma*. Understanding that, the mind goes to an even, level state.

The Dhamma teachings of the Buddha are like a bag of tools. Sometimes you have to pull out this one, sometimes another one. You need to use the right tools for the right job.

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